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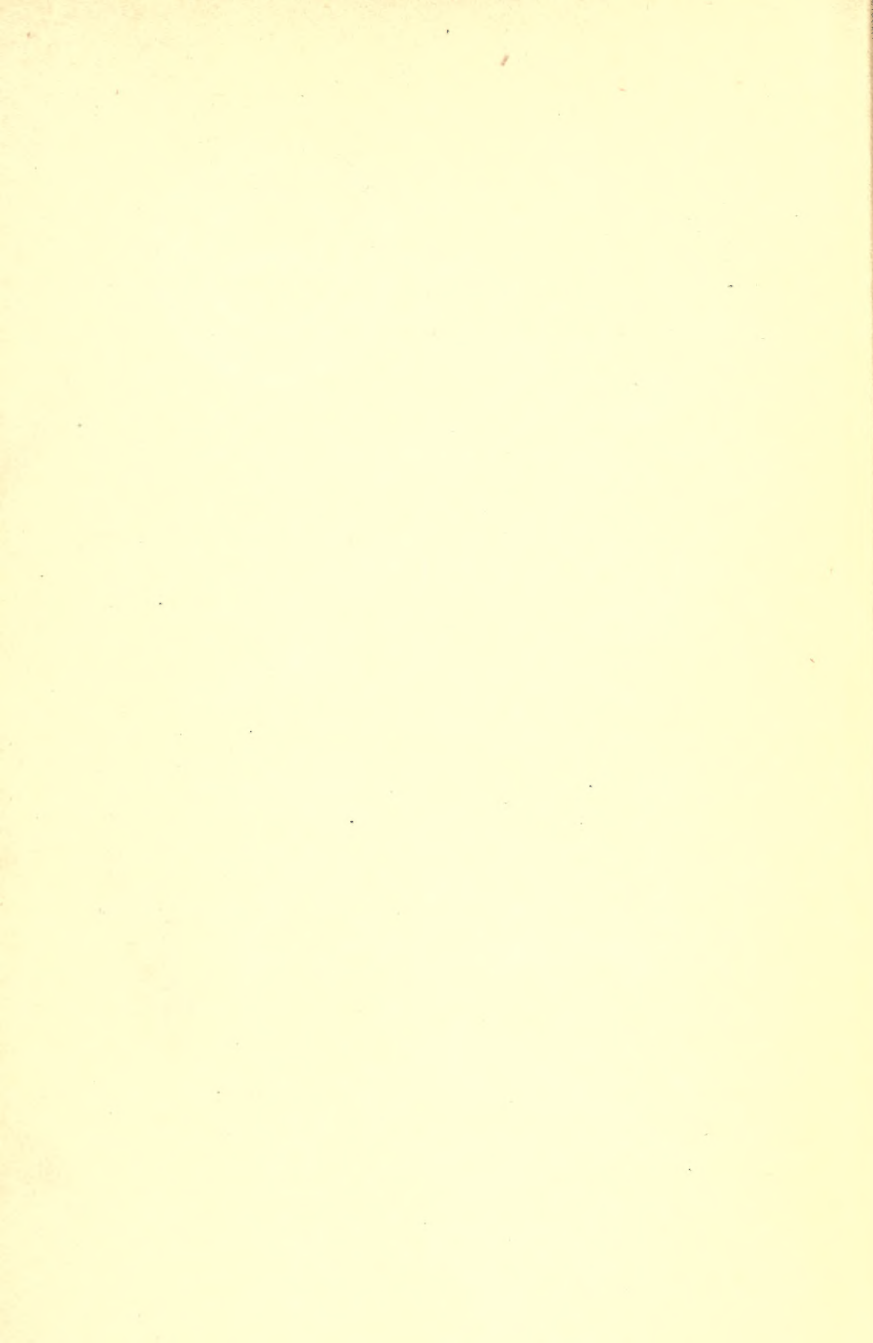
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TIMOTHY;

OR

LETTERS TO A YOUNG THEOLOGIAN.

BY

Dr. FRANZ HETTINGER.

TRANSLATED AND ADAPTED BY

REV. VICTOR STEPKA.

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✠ JOHN J. KAIN,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page
Letter I. — Vocation.	1
True idealism. — The transitory and the intransitory. — Pessimism and the Christian view. — Two kinds of theology. — Marks of a vocation.	
Letter II. — Vocation. (continued.)	20
Natural and positive theology and their connection. — Praise of positive theology. — Christianity, truth and fact. — The Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist. — Christianity and humanity.	
Letter III. — Vocation. (continued.)	34
Theology as the central science. — The other sci- ences. — Philosophy and theology. — Theology and the natural sciences. — Jurisprudence, diplo- macy, and theology. — History and theology. — Universality of theology.	
Letter IV. — Vocation. (concluded.)	44
Choice of a calling in the light of eternity. — The soul with God alone. — Theological vocation, sacer- dotal vocation. — Recognition of the sacerdotal vocation by meditation on the Mass. — The ser- mon, its meaning, its intimate connection with the holy Sacrifice. — The priesthood and its dignity. — Earthly death, heavenly life, the motto of the priesthood.	
Letter V. — The Study of Philosophy	69
What is philosophy? — Why do we study philo- sophy? — Leo XIII. and philosophy. — Import- tance of philosophy for theology. — It is a pre- paration for theology. — Philosophia ancilla theologiae. — Old and new philosophy. — Merits of scholasticism. — Philosophy and empiricism. — Fundamental idea of scholastic philosophy. — The study of the history of philosophy. — Disputations.	

	Page
Letter VI. — The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.....	101
Approbation of St. Thomas by the Pope. — Importance of St. Thomas. — His doctrine on cognition. — Agreement with and contradiction to Kant. — His argument on the existence of God. — Knowledge of the divine essence. — Refutation of materialism and pantheism. — The universal being of pantheism and the personal God.	
Letter VII. — The Philosophy of St. Thomas. (concluded.)	126
Cosmology of St. Thomas. — Anthropology of St. Thomas. — Spirituality and immortality of the soul. — Supernatural cognition of God. — Vision of God. — Necessity of revelation. — The method of St. Thomas in his Summa theologica. — His ethics. — Morality is orderly love, evil is disorderly love. — Conscience and virtue. — Law. — Christ the model. — The State and the Church.	
Letter VIII. — Theology and the Natural Sciences.....	155
St. Augustine on the natural sciences. — No contradiction between theology and the sciences. — Points of agreement between theology and the sciences. — Knowledge of the ultimate causes. — The natural sciences in Aristotle and the scholastics. — The natural and the intellectual sciences.	
Letter IX. — Theology and the Natural Sciences. (concluded.)	173
The view of nature in the Bible. — The knowledge of the beauties of nature in the Fathers. — The hermits and monks. — Ecclesiastical writers. — The life of nature as a symbolism of the intellect. — The cycle of feasts of the ecclesiastical year.	

CONTENTS.

v

Page

Letter X.—Art Studies.....	189
<p>God the archetype of beauty. — Mission of art. — In how far does art imitate nature? — Art “second in descent” from God. — Beauty of creation. — The twofold nature of all works of art. — Beauty indefinable. — Religion and art. — Art in worship. — Sensible, human, divine beauty. — Religious art, Christian art, ecclesiastical art. — Liturgy and art. — History of art and monumental theology.</p>	
Letter XI.—Art Studies.....	211
<p>Union between ancient and Christian art. — Influence of ancient art on Christian art. — Difference between ancient and Christian art. — Beauty of form a secondary factor only. — Christian art forbids the nude. — It is perfectly right herein. — The highest principle of Christian art. — Art a second Bible. — The harm done by dilettantism. — Religious importance of pictures. — Devotional pictures. — The divine beauty.</p>	
Letter XII. — The Seminary.....	238
<p>Preparation for the priesthood with the Fathers. — Sts. Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzum, Chrysostom, Augustine. — Genuine seclusion. — Seminary training a law of the Church. — Meditation in the seminary. — Neglect of meditation a cause of worldliness.</p>	
Letter XIII. — The Seminary. (concluded.)	254
<p>Christ the type of the inner life. — The inner life in the saints. — Inner life the mother of living faith. — Therein is all power of the priesthood. — Genuine meditation. — Science and meditation. — Essence of Christian perfection. — Importance of the seminary regulations. — Rules of the seminary and formation of character. — Science in the seminary. — Love of the Church and mutual charity. — Politeness and decorum. — The spirit of the children of God,</p>	

	Page
Letter XIV. — The Spiritual Exercises.....	283
<p>Their history and mission. — They are recommended by ecclesiastical authority. — True and false reformation. — Imagination and memory in the service of the spiritual exercises. — The fundamental meditations. — The central-idea of the spiritual exercises. — The three degrees of humility. — The life, passion and resurrection of Christ. — Meditations on the love of God. — Division of the exercises into four weeks. — The purgative, illuminative and unitive way. — Benefits of the spiritual exercises.</p>	
Letter XV. — The Study of Theology.....	304
<p>The seminary again. — Formation of character by obedience. — Condition for a fruitful study of theology. — Essence of theology. — In how far does science "puff up"? — True science leads to God and makes one humble. — The habitus of theology remains in heaven. — The halo of the teacher. — Theology as a science.</p>	
Letter XVI. — The Study of Theology. (concluded.).....	318
<p>The method of theology. — One-sided and false methods. — Terminology. — Dangers of new terminologies. — Importance and duty of the teacher. — No danger from the 'ipse dixit' of the teacher. — Confidence in the teacher. — Read little, but good, Catholic books. — Reading and taking notes. — Much reading of Protestant books hurtful. — Reasons therefor. — The 'royal road' of the theologian. — Greatness of our vocation.</p>	
Letter XVII. — Fundamental Theology.....	340
<p>Mission of fundamental theology. — Diversity of views in the exposition of fundamental theology. — More liberal forms of apology. — Position of fundamental theology in the organism of</p>	

CONTENTS.

vii
Page

the sciences.—It is a precursor of faith.—Reasonableness of faith. — Argument taken from the foundation and development of Christianity. — Polemics. — False plea for peace.

Letter XVIII. — Dogmatic Theology..... 351

Positive dogmatic theology. — Speculative dogmatic theology. — The teaching of the Church the subject of dogmatic theology. — The teaching of the Church is proposed to us in different ways. — Ecclesiastical censures. — Sources of revelation. — The Bible. — Method of dogmatic theology. — The arguments from Scripture. — Tradition. — Dogmatic theology and the history of dogmas. — Speculative dogmatic theology. — Speculation and the mysteries. — Fruits of the study of dogmatic theology.

Letter XIX. — Moral Theology..... 372

Difference and concordance between dogmatic and moral theology. — Moral theology of Protestantism and autonomous morality.—Kant's "categorical imperative". — Morality based on humanity. — Theonomy genuine autonomy. — Natural ethics. — Proof of the teachings of moral theology from the Bible and Tradition. — Diverse views in moral theology. — Casuistry. — Probabilism. — Importance of casuistry.

Letter XX. — Canon Law..... 397

Relation of canon law to dogmatic and moral theology. — Divine and human law. — The Church a perfect society. — The ecclesiastical plenitude of power of the Pope. — Independence of the Church in her sphere. — The Church and persecutions.

Letter XXI. — Biblical Studies..... 406

Biblical theology and its auxiliary branches. — Sublimity of the Bible. — Preparation for reading it. — First take a view of the whole. — Reading of

the Bible in the spirit of the Church. — Its interpretation by the Fathers. — The breviary admonishes to read the Bible daily. — First the books of the New, then of the Old Testament. — Utility of studying the biblical auxiliary sciences.

Letter XXII. — Church History..... 428

World-plan and world-history. — Philosophy of history. — The Christian view. — The modern systems of a philosophy of history. — Kant, Hegel, Lessing. — Pragmatism of history. — Buckle and his school. — Without Christ the world's history is inexplicable. — History before and after Christ. — Character of both. — Church history and universal history. — God the key of universal history. — Religious view of history. — Church history an argument for the divinity of Christianity. — Catholic history of culture.

Letter XXIII. — The Fathers..... 453

The Fathers witnesses of the influence of the Church. — Their peculiar character. — Their importance for dogmatic theology, Bible-interpretation, moral and pastoral theology. — The type in the Church. — Why called our Fathers and teachers? Method of studying the Fathers.

Letter XXIV. — Care of Souls..... 463

The care of souls the goal of all our preparation. — Dignity of this office. — Christ in the pastor. — Arduousness of this office. — Sts. Augustine, Ambrose, Jerome, Gregory of Nazianzum. — Christ the refuge and shield of the pastor. — The parsonage the best school to learn the care of souls.

Letter XXV. — Catechetics..... 483

Mission of the catechist. — Humility, patience, love, the necessary virtues. — The child viewed in the light of faith. — Love of children. — Patience

CONTENTS.

ix
Page

with the children. — Importance of the personality of the catechist. — The catechism must be learned by heart. — Why we should ask questions. — Inventive method out of place. — Popular style. — External appearance of the catechist.

Letter XXVI. — Homiletics..... 506

Mission of the sermon. — Catechetics and the sermon. — Dignity of the sermon. — Oratory in the Church. — Effects of the sermon. — The Church is edified by the word of mouth, not by written documents. — Threefold office of the sermon. — Human words the organ of the divine word. — Therefore the necessity of education. — Schools of oratory. — Why are they needed?

Letter XXVII. — Liturgy..... 532

Liturgy encompasses the Christian's whole life. — Necessity of understanding it. — It is an expression of faith. — Sacred places, seasons, hymns, persons. — Word and deed. — Sacrifice the highest act of worship. — It is the center of all communion of worship. — The oblation of the Head is the form of the mystical oblation of its members. — How the priest should celebrate Mass.



TIMOTHY, OR LETTERS TO A YOUNG THEOLOGIAN.

LETTER I.

Vocation.

In your letters, my young friend, you have repeatedly expressed your confidence in me; you have revealed your heart to me and permitted me to look into its innermost recesses. Within it can still be perceived the agitation of conflicting ideas, restlessly moving like the rising and falling mists of early morn; but I notice also, that the Sun of Eternal Truth has risen to you in the very prime of your life, and that, as He rises higher and higher above the horizon, His rays are ever increasing in warmth and brightness. Take courage, they will penetrate to the very depths of your heart, where darkness still reigns, and soon your inner self, which you are to shape, will stand forth in the light of truth,—of that truth, which God has given to man as an early morning gift at the beginning of his earthly career. This indeed is the proof of our birth out of God, the seal

2 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

of our heavenly destination, that He, Who sent us forth into life, Who bade us travel along the manifold and intricate paths of the world, did not let us go alone: in our reason and in the natural sciences, as well as in the innate desire of our will for all that is good¹, He has given us a guide, a protector, a pedagogue on our way, who, if we do not turn aside our gaze, but allow ourselves to be led by him, will safely conduct us to that Higher Light, Which illumines all mankind, to that "Sun of Spirits and of Graces, Jesus Christ."²

There is an undefined longing in you, for objects are not yet clear to your view: at one time you experience joy whenever you hear of noble actions, or learn of men's generous deeds; at another, sorrow, because you do not find your ideals verified; and nevertheless you do not wish to live, nor can you do so, without these ideals. You are perfectly right, my young friend, for, according to an old saying: *res contempta homo est, nisi se supra humana elevaverit.* (Petrarch). This longing, of which you write to me, this silent happiness, with which at quiet moments you are filled, is the state of a soul, in which love is unfolding

¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa* I. II., q. 109, a. 3.—I. II., q. 8. a. 1., cf. likewise, I. II., q. 10, a. 2; I. q. 60. a. 5; q. 82, a. 2.

² Clem. Alex., *Strom.* VI., 6; I. 22. Justinus II. *Apol.* c. 10.

itself; it all depends on what kind of love this is. The truth which Plato has significantly portrayed in the myth of Eros, the son of Poros and of Penia,¹ is one, to which the personal experience of each one of us bears testimony. Where is there a man, who does not appear to himself forsaken and left to his own resources, when he looks into his poor, ailing, weak, hesitating, sinful heart? Who is not filled with grief when he beholds the things of this world, which so soon vanish and perish? Who does not wistfully gaze about, to see, whether help is not forthcoming to him in his poverty? Celestial Eros raises his light-seeking eyes heavenward, that he may, as Plato says, find eternal truth and bliss immortal in the contemplation of the ideal. Sensual love lowers the vision and draws it down toward the earth. Michelangelo says:

L'un tira al cielo e l'altro a terra tira,
Nell 'alma l'un, l'altr 'abita nei sensi,
E l'arco volge a segno e basso e vile.

There had been no true longing, but only a vile, a sensual desire; the soul that cannot aspire to regions above, will aim only at vain objects and yearn after air-castles,² which cannot satisfy its wants. For a moment it may imagine it has found happiness; but it is

¹ Symposium, ed. Stephan. 3, 203.

² Ps. 4, 3.

4 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

only as the dream of one dreaming: he awakes, and behold, his soul is empty.¹ Heavenly Eros however will remain, even though the period of youthful emotions shall have passed away, even though the many-colored buds and blossoms of fancy shall have faded and fallen to the ground, even though the thought of earthly vanities and the conviction, that all things here below are fleeting, shall no longer admit of delusion, even though night shall be approaching and our day shall have reached its sunset. The aspirations of him who gazes heavenward shall never die; gratified by no earthly happiness, nor cast down by earthly afflictions, his longing will grow stronger in adversity; for, in the warfare of life and in the tumult of this world, his eye will ever be raised aloft: *this longing seeks God and is of God.*

May it be thus with you, Timothy! Look up toward this Sun, which has risen for you in the prime of your life; permit His light to penetrate your entire being, that by His splendor you may become light itself; His bright rays will dissipate the mists, which have cast so many a gloomy spell upon your soul; they will disperse the dark clouds, and God's own May-day will dawn within your soul. Never does the Seraph turn away his gaze from God's beauty, for in this vision he is blessed; thus may also

¹ Isa. 29, 8.

the contemplation of God make you blessed; for besides this there is no true nor lasting blessedness.¹

From your letters I recognize the sincerity of your views of life, the purity of your morals and of your aspirations. The consciousness of an undefiled youth is the greatest treasure for one's whole life, and as a precious balm it diffuses its fragrance over all the powers and qualities of your soul. A chaste heart is capable of the highest love; a pure heart has a clear eye to discern the truth; for the clean of heart shall see God.² The talented but unfortunate Sainte Beuve once said: *La volupté est un grand agent de dissolution pour la foi et elle inocule plus ou moins le scepticisme. La vague tristesse, qui s'exhale comme une odeur de mort du sein des plaisirs, cette lassitude éternante et découragée n'est pas seulement un trouble pour ce qui est du sentiment, elle réagit aussi sur la chaîne de nos idées. Le principe de certitude en nous se trouve à la longue atteint et déconcerté.* With these words he described his own fate. The thought of death and of the vanity of earthly things often returns to you; the faded leaf which was blown before

¹ St. Augustine, *De vera religione* III., 3: *Animae tantum rationali et intellectuali datum est, ut ejus (Dei) aeternitatis contemplatione perfruatur et afficiatur ornaturque ex ea, aeternamque vitam possit mereri.*

² Matth. 5, 8.

6 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

your feet by the autumn winds, gave you an occasion in your last letter to express at length your firm conviction of the nothingness of life. Wherever you go, you write, death stares you in the face; death has left its stamp on every thing you see; the land over which you travel, death has travelled it before you; the hand of a friend, which now you press—it is but dust, that you hold in your hand. And as leaf after leaf falls from the trees, so does man after man fall from the tree of life, and we are constantly walking amid graves. As we see men falling, so the sun, moon and stars must fall in their day. You are surprised to read that Tacitus called a period of only twenty years a “*grande mortalibus aevum*,” and you agree with St. Augustine, when he calls this whole created life “only a little while”: “*Modicum est hoc totum spatium, quo praesens pervolat saeculum.*”¹ As though you are in doubt, you ask me: Will not the human heart with all its longings and desires also fade as the flowers fade?

The rose-bud's beauty hath its day,

And then, no more;

The nightingale sings one sweet lay,

And then, no more:

And love's young dream, too, fades away,

As pallid death

Enshrouds the tender bloom of May,

And then, no more.

¹ In Joan. tract. 101, 6.

But dread not thou the grief and smart
That haunt thee still;
The storm once rushes through the heart,
And then, no more;
Yes, all the world, the wide, wide world,—
Why sorrow then?—
The mighty world e'en hath its day,
And then, no more.

My dear young friend, what shall I say of these sentiments of your soul? Shall I find fault with them? I cannot and I may not. Our Lord Himself called all earthly toil and labor, unless it be permeated with the thought of eternity, a burial of the dead. "Let the dead bury their dead."¹ For this reason St. Thomas Aquinas recognized in the "*contemneres res mundanas*" a sign, that God's grace is dwelling in us.² And just those men have worked wonders in the intellectual world, who have felt deeply and at an early stage of their lives, the nothingness and insufficiency of all earthly things; thus Homer and Sophocles among the ancients, and Dante³, Shakespeare, and Michelangelo⁴ in modern times. I need not remind you of those saintly youths of our

¹ Luke 9, 60.

² Summa I. II. q. 112, a. 5.

³ Vita nuova, ch. 23.

⁴ E veggio ben, che della vita sono
Ventura e grazia l'ore brevi e corte ;
Chè l'umane miserie han fin per morte.

8 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Church, who gladly renounced all earthly honors and possessions, for no other reason than because they deemed them unworthy of their great souls and insufficient to satisfy their longings. But nevertheless they fell not into an unhealthy, morbid, indolent melancholy: "*Quam sordet terra, cum coelum aspicio*" they said. The nothingness of this life was an incentive to them to desire with greater earnestness for another and better one. This however is a sentiment altogether different from the "*taedium vitae*" we find among the ancients, and, in modern form, among many of our own contemporaries. The former is the expression of a noble and exalted soul, penetrated by the thought of the infinite; the latter is but a manifestation of a man, in whom spiritual life has long ago died away, and for whom even sensual pleasure has lost its charm; in the former we recognize a soul, remembering the God, from Whom it has come forth, in the latter, a being lost in the visible world. With the one we find a fruitful germ, from which springs up a beautiful, rich and blessed human life, with the other, sterility, icecoldness, doubt and despair; in a word: in the one there is a sorrow unto life, in the other, a sorrow unto death.¹ Hence I praise the former sentiment of the soul, and blame the latter;

¹ 2. Cor. 7, 19. : *Tristitia mundi mortem operatur.*

the one is like the balmy breath of spring, gently spreading like a veil over field and meadow, unfolding buds and bringing forth blossoms and flowers; the other is like a poisonous vapor, brooding over dismal swamps corruption.

It is true, my young friend, the fashion of this world passeth away.¹ What then is to be done? What conclusions are you to draw for yourself? Are you to return to the opinion of the ancients, and with Theognis² bewail the misery of all earthly existence?

Never to have been born, ah, this were
best for us mortals,
Never to drink of the sun's radiant
beauty: but,
Having been born, 'twere best, to enter at
once the dark portals,
Leaving this mortal coil under memo-
rial mound.

Or are you to join the adepts of a modern quack-philosophy, which favors Buddhism and pessimism, and look on death and annihilation as the sole good and the greatest happiness of man, and say to death: Be thou my redeemer? No, a thousand times, no! *Naturally, he, who has tried to find his highest bliss and final happiness in this world, must necessarily reap*

¹ 1. Cor. 7, 31.

² Eleg. reliq. v. 425 sqq.

10 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

disappointment and disgust for it as his sole necessary portion; having emptied the foaming cup of pleasure and blunted all taste for enjoyment, and being now undeceived, he dashes the cup to pieces. I deplore this philosophy, because it robs our youth of its ideals, because it dries up the young heart and destroys love within the breast.

No, *not everything is vain; not everything is perishable*; the transitory things are only the curtain, behind which dwells the imperishable; they are the symbol and the helping hand extended to lead us unto the invisible. Correctly therefore the poet¹ says:

Why so large cost, having so short a lease
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? Is this thy body's end?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more;
So shalt thou feed on Death, that feeds on
men,
And, Death once dead, there's no more dying
then.

There is an ideal world, which is above the real; it is imperishable, and shall never pass away. You are to foster this desire of yours

¹ Shakespeare, 146, sonnet.

for ideals, and not suffer yourself to be misled by the changes around you. In their realization you will live a genuine, a worthy life; from them you will receive eternal youth, even though your body wither and pass away. Why is it, we have so many "old young men," but for the fact, that a sensual and worldly life fast leads to a premature old age; whilst, on the other hand there are so many youthful old men, because in these ideals they have, as it were, the secret of rejuvenation, they have in them an element continually renewing their youth, as the youth of the eagle.¹

"*Invicem insanire videmur*" says St. Jerome in speaking of the difference that exists between the ambitions of the worldling and the aspirations of the children of God. Many years before his time Festus had already said: "Paul, thou art beside thyself."² He, who knows not of an eternity and of a place beyond the grave, has but this poor earthly life, short and dreary as a winter's day, which is soon followed by the night. Consequently it is but natural, that he should try to submerge the painful conviction of his nothingness in the tumultuous waves of earthly pleasures, seeking gratification in wordly honor and distinction, in riches and enjoyment.

¹ Ps. 102, 5.

² Acts, 26, 24.

12 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

I know it, my dear Timothy, even if you had not mentioned it in your letters: Your eyes will never be satiated by the things you see, and your soul would die of anguish, had you to satisfy your desires with the pleasures of this world. Therefore “*Sursum corda!*” Cherish this noble sentiment of yours, which strives after ideals; this desire to live for your ideals is the only true and best mode of living.

Does there actually exist an ideal, which is real and does not pass away? Where is this my ideal? Listen for a moment to the words of a youth, who, like you, had become wearied with the constant change of terrestrial things and was striving after a higher standard. And he found what he desired, and peace came to his soul. It is St. Augustine. “Convert us, O God, and show us Thy face, and we shall be saved.¹ Whithersoever the soul of man may turn, everywhere it shall find but sorrow, except in Thee, though what it finds outside of Thee and outside of self may appear ever so beautiful. And even these things would not be beautiful were it not for Thee; they come forth and pass away; they begin their existence; they grow, they perfect themselves; and having reached their perfection, they grow old and decay; for all things grow old and pass away. And by arising and striving to exist,

¹ Ps. 79, 4.

the more they hasten their growth, the faster they hasten to pass away; for that is their fate Therefore listen; the Lord Himself calls to you to turn your back on the noise of vanity; behold the place of steadfast rest, where love shall never be deserted, unless it be first to desert. For behold, all things pass away to make room for others *Shall I likewise pass away?* says the Word of God. Here choose a place of rest, my soul, you, who have been wearied by so many deceptions. Give to truth what you have received from truth and you shall loose nothing; and your wounds shall heal, and what is sick in you, shall recover, and all that wastes away shall be renewed and remain and shall not pass away with other transitory things, but shall persevere and last with the everlasting, immutable God.”¹

In God we have our ideal, in God we have found the object of our longing. He who would seek it outside of God, will go astray; were he to raise himself up to the stars, or descend to the depths of the earth to seek it, he would not find it there. “What is it, that I love? I asked the earth and it answered: I am not it. I asked the seas and the abysses, and they answered: we are not thy God. I asked the heavens, the sun, the moon and the

¹ Conf. IV., 10. sq.

14 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

stars; we are not, they answer, the God thou seekest. And therefore I called to all things round about me: Tell me something of my God, since you are not He, tell me something of Him! And they cried with a powerful voice: He has made us."¹

Let us receive our nourishment from this Source! He is the life of our life.² Let us abandon ourselves to Him. Even as the stars illumine the darkness of earthly night, thus do eternal thoughts spread brightness over the changing waters of time; as the pilot looks to the Polar Star, so does our mind look up to them. Many storms are still to come, many battles still to be fought; for the world will not easily relinquish its hold upon us, nor is it an easy matter to wrest ourselves from its manifold embraces; but, we are not struggling in vain, and the prize at stake is worth the combats. It is thus only, that life receives its momentous significance; then only are its records entered on the annals of eternity. It is true indeed, that our life, too, is short and fleeting, that it will vanish like a shadow, and that, ere long, few, if any, will remain to think of us; but it will have passed away only in its *exterior, visible* form; the eternal thoughts in which we live, which give impulse to our actions

¹ Ps. 99, 3.—St. Augustine: 1. c. X., 6.

² St. Augustine, 1. c.: Deus autem tuus etiam tibi vitæ vita est.

and significance to our thoughts, will have infused into us the breath of immortality. We too, it is true, are like waves on the river of time, but we shall not sink into darkness; we have a future before us; the idea of God, which, as a gentle evening-star illumines our path, when the shadows of night overtake us, will brighten, and be our morning-star, announcing that day, which knows no sunset.

Thus, my young friend, does this short, perishable life of ours receive its great, eternal significance and become worth living. As the golden back-ground upon which the old masters used to paint their pictures idealizes the characters and brings them into prominence, so the idea of eternity forms a back-ground for all our actions, and sanctifies, by a supernatural unction, even the most insignificant things we do or suffer; it is a magic wand, whose touch will transform the earthly into the heavenly, and already here below renders us participants of the very life of God.¹ Yes, all things are vain, even the greatest and most glorious, when detached from their Center, from Which only they derive their true greatness and their lasting reality. They, who relinquish earthly happiness for God's sake, and who do not seek peace and pleasure in this world, "shall receive a hundredfold,"² for "all

¹ Arist. : Eth. Nicomach, X., 7.

² Matth. 19, 29.

16 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

things are yours" says the apostle.¹ And therefore not everything is vain; science, art, virtue, religion, in a word, everything that imparts to life its significance, dignity, happiness and beauty, is not in vain. For *science*, indeed, elevates itself from the individual and the transitory to the universal and the lasting, which, as true being, is reflected in the individual, accidental and transitory, and ascends to the idea, bearing within itself the ultimate cause and essence of things.²

Thus we acquire the knowledge of true being, in opposition to transitory appearances, the intelligence of the ultimate causes of all being, of the "Prime Cause and End," from Which everything has sprung, and towards Which all things move.³

¹ 1. Cor. 3, 22.

² Aug.: De divers. quaest. LXXXIII, q. 46, 2.: Sunt namque ideae principales formae quaedam vel rationes rerum stabiles atque incommutabiles, quia ipsae formatae non sunt, ac per hoc aeternae ac semper eodem modo se habentes, quae in divina intelligentia continentur. Et cum ipsae neque oriantur neque intereant, secundum eas tamen formari dicitur omne, quod oriri et interire potest, et omne, quod oritur et interit.—Cf. Thomas, Summ. I. q. 15, art. 1.: quia mundus non est casu factus, sed est factus a Deo per intellectum agente, necesse est, quod in mente divina sit forma, ad similitudinem cuius mundus est factus. Et in hoc consistit ratio ideae.

³ Thomas, Contra gentil. I, 1: Nomen simpliciter sapientis illi soli reservatur, cuius consideratio circa finem universi versatur, qui etiam est universitatis principium—according to Arist., Metaphys. I, 1.

This is, my young friend, that wisdom, for which the best men of all ages have sought, for which you too are longing. *Theology* it was already called by Aristotle, and designated as the first and highest of all sciences.¹ He was right; for the idea of truth necessarily leads the intellect to one primal and first Truth; the idea of good to one primal and first Good; the idea of being to one illimitable, immense, absolute Being—to *God*.

Speculative theology, which, with the aid of reason, leads to truth, and by truth to God, *is not the final end*. True, it is the scope of the intellect, its highest and most beautiful task, its crown and its pride, that, rising from link to link in the chain of finite appearances, it ascends to God. True, aided by the light of reason we recognize truth, and in truth the divinity, but we recognize truth in as much only as its rays are reflected by the visible world, aye, and of these rays even we have but an imperfect apprehension. The Sun of Truth diffuses His light over the field of the sciences, but dark clouds also cast their shadows upon it. The finiteness and limitation of our nature also have erected a barrier to our intelligence. We may indeed widen the horizon by pushing outward the barrier, but

¹ Metaphys. 2: Οὐτε τῆς τοιαύτης ἄλλην (ἐπιστήμην) χρὴ νομίζειν τιμωτήραν; ἥ γὰρ θειοτάτη καὶ τιμωτάτη; τοιαύτη δὲ διχῶς ἂν εἴη μόνη.

18 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

we shall never be able to surmount it. The Stagirite gives utterance to an unquestionable truth when he compares the human intellect in its relation to the light of absolute truth, to the eyes of a night-bird, when exposed to the bright rays of the sun.¹ For the reasoning intellect, however, this very barrier will become a guide-board to a higher sphere of intelligence; for it corresponds to a distinct want in the soul of man, the necessity of casting one's lot with a higher, safer element of truth, of relying implicitly upon a "divine word," such a word as Socrates² already longed for and Plato³ desired. Thus faith becomes the *perfection of science*, and the complement of knowledge; and every true science necessarily perceives this region of truth, into which we enter by faith, and in which we acquire that wisdom, which surpasses all human wisdom.

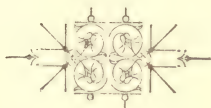
Thus, my dear Timothy, following in the paths of the sciences, starting from a meditative contemplation of this world, and in union with the results of rational investigation, illumined by the truth, which the Divine Word has spoken to us, fertilized and nourished by these divine thoughts, elevated to a higher supernatural degree of understanding, the human intellect has established the science of faith—

¹ Metaphys. II, 1.

² Alcibiad., II, (2, 147.)

³ Phaed.: λόγος θεῖός τις (I, 85.)

positive, supernatural theology. About this science we shall henceforth converse. You ask, whether you have the vocation to be a theologian? “*Delectari in Deo,*”¹ says St. Thomas, is a second special mark, that God is with us. He cannot go astray, whose soul is trained to despise the world and to seek God. Thank God for having imparted to your soul such a disposition; a call from Him is like a feeling of home-sickness for a better world; in it you may recognize your vocation. The noise of this life resounds so loudly in our ears; the waves of earthly turmoil beat fiercely against us; the higher regions of the soul, where a heavenly life is to bloom and heavenly thoughts are to take up their dwelling, must be protected like an island in a stormy sea, by a high wall, and must be guarded very vigilantly, and not without combat.



¹ Summ. I. II., q. 112, a. 5.

LETTER II.

Vocation.

(Continued.)

You ask me, my young friend, wherein the connection exists between philosophy, natural theology, and supernatural positive theology? Are they totally strange, nay even opposed to one another? you ask. This was the teaching of P. Pomponatius and of the Neo-Aristotelians; and in modern times Schleiermacher and his school also follow this teaching. The same doctrine has been propounded by Luther and the Reformers, though they start from other suppositions, basing their opinions upon the statement, that the human mind is totally blind in regard to divine things, by reason of the fall of man; this was also the doctrine of Hegel, who held that revelation and Christianity have no right to exist, except as an exposition of absolute philosophy in its practical representation.

You will easily understand, how arbitrary and false such statements are. God's plan regarding this world is *one*, but destined to be executed in different ways and by different

means. Grace presupposes nature, and revelation is based on reason. Knowledge must find its complement and perfection in faith; in the unity of destiny—the beatitude of the creature—all the members are connected together in one divinely co-ordinated grand whole.

This connection of human reason with faith, of the entire scope of profane sciences with that of supernatural revelation has already been indicated by the Fathers in their doctrine regarding the λόγος σπερματικός. They say, that even before Christ such men as Socrates, Heraclitus and others had received through the Logos, “Who illumines the whole world,” some seeds (σπέρματα) of truth; that thus even pagan philosophers were prepared for the coming of Christian truth; that indeed we might consider them as pre-Christian Christians, had they lived according to the teachings of the Logos.¹ Athenagoras mentions the pagan philosophers as speaking of a kind of relationship, existing between the divine intellect and the human;² Clement of Alexandria remarks, that, as the Law was given to the Jews, so philosophy was given to the Greeks prior to the advent of Christ, lending to both the hand, that was to lead them to Christianity.³

¹ Justinus: II. Apolog. c. 10; I. Apolog. c. 46; cf. Dialogum Trypho. c. 1—8, where he describes his transition from philosophy to Christianity.

² Legatio pro christ. c. 7.

³ Stromata I., 5; VI., 6.

22 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

The difference then between natural and positive theology consists in this, that natural theology takes its origin from the natural principles of human intelligence, positive theology from fundamental truths, which can be known only by the light of supernatural truth; for the Word, that illumines the whole world, was made flesh and dwelt among us.¹ For this reason, as Clement says, the wisdom of the Greeks, although bearing the same name, is totally different from ours, both on account of the extent of the knowledge itself, and on account of the power of conviction; for it is God Himself Who teaches us, and His divine Son, Who speaks to us in the Scriptures.² Positive theology *presupposes* science, that science, namely, which treats of the credibility of revelation (Apologetics); it *creates* a science, by proceeding from principles indubitably certain, and, placing the entire field of human knowledge in its service,³ thereby establishes a system of Christian knowledge; it *conquers* false science, because it refutes antagonistic assertions and erects a durable wall against all hostile assaults.⁴

The greatest minds, the intellectual giants, and the greatest saints of every century have

¹ Thomas, in libr. Boëth. de Trinitate, q. 2, a. 2.

² Strom. I., 20.

³ Strom. I., 20.

⁴ Strom. 1. c.

studied this science, which encompasses heaven and earth, divinity and humanity, time and eternity; to it they have devoted the noblest and best powers of their souls; they have delved into its wonderful depths, and thereby have become great, and rendered great service in all departments of human activity. They have labored for centuries in erecting this grand temple of Christian science, carefully shaping stone after stone with the mallet and chisel of dialectics, until they have reared the grand edifice from its very foundations.

Thus it is that theology becomes the *most sublime* of all sciences; for what can be more sublime than God, Who is its primary object? What can be more sublime than the world, viewed in the light of God? ¹ Thus theology becomes the *most necessary* of all sciences; for it alone can give a satisfactory answer to the question which rises to the lips of every man, as soon as he looms above this sea of sensible appearances and begins to inquire after the cause and end of things. *Whence* are all these objects? *Wherefore*? Men have asked themselves these questions in a thousand languages; they may have tried to stifle the unbidden question a thousand times, yet they could not succeed. These questions present themselves to the human mind, wherever it may wander,

¹ Thomas, *Summa*, I. q. 1., a. 7.

24 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

and sooner or later a solution must be found. All other sciences move around the surface of human life, theology alone reaches its *center*; it defines the relation between man and God, which is to regulate, determine and shape his relations to all other things. Theology is the *most universal* of all sciences; for all the knowledge, which man may gain from the study of nature and history, from the contemplation of regions visible and invisible, the truths discernible in the starry heavens and in the dust of this earth, all the theories of metaphysics and the theses of ethics, all these will eventually lead us to theology, proving, approving and explaining its doctrines. And vice versa: every doctrine of theology throws its full-shining light upon all branches of science and upon all epochs of life. Its dogmas are the *eternal thoughts of God Himself*, which make all things consistent; its laws are the standard of all genuine human, social and individual life. From the heights to which it elevates us, we may survey with a steady glance all the realms of science and of life; and we shall find in this all-encompassing science the final and convincing explanation for all and every remarkable feature, which we may have learned regarding the vicissitudes of humanity and its guidance along the centuries of history, of its destinies and its problems, as

well as of its errors and its combats. It has *solved the problem*, which has occupied and is still occupying the human mind, the mysterious problem of this world, and, like the Polar Star, it stands high above the surging waves and mists of human opinions; looking up to it, the human mind will find in it its guiding star, always pointing out the right direction. Hence the history of theology becomes a necessary study for the scientist, and is in itself the history of human development and culture. Let me recall to your mind, my young friend, a few words of the Angelic Doctor.¹ The study of wisdom, he says, is the most *perfect* of studies; for in as far as man occupies himself with it, he participates even here on earth in true beatitude; no other study surpasses this one in *sublimity*, for by wisdom man is made similar to God, Who has formed everything in His wisdom; nothing is so *useful* as wisdom, for by it we shall be led to eternal felicity; and nothing is so *delightful*, for intercourse with God knows of no bitterness, but is replete with pleasure and joy.²

Christian theology is the *science* of *Christian faith*. It offers us a system of ideas, of knowledge, of doctrines; but this is not all; it builds up a *system* of *divine deeds*, which proceed from and lead back to a center,—the *Incarnation of*

¹ Contra gent. I., 2.

² Wisdom 8, 16.

26 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

God in Christ. This revelation of the Incarnate Word, is an act of incalculable importance. All the centuries that preceded prepared the way for the Incarnate God, and the centuries after Him, even to the end of times, will find in Him redemption from sin, misery, and death.

And now only do you recognize the sublime importance of theology; "God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."¹ This it is, which makes theology a Christian science. Were religion only the solution of scientific problems, were man in need only of a series of truths to enrich his intellect, to enlighten his reason, it would not be *the* science, after which we long, the science which is to bring us redemption. Sin, misery and death are *stern realities*; throughout the history of mankind, like powers of darkness, they march along and cast their dark shadows into our inmost souls; filling us with fear and terror. Hence we cannot satisfy our minds with a religion, which contents itself with the *solution* of scientific problems only; what we seek from it is *redemption* from sin and death, peace, joy and immortal bliss. Religion must be to us a guide through the camp of our enemies, who surround us; it must act as a solace to console us when thoughts of death

¹ 2 Cor. 5, 19.

and judgment arise within our hearts. Only that religion can effect this, which refers us to the *Person* of the *God-man*, and introduces us into the mysteries of His life and passion, of His victory and glory.

For this reason, we theologians are ever anxious to descend into the unfathomable depths of this science, for we know, that we shall always return with new treasures; thousands have drawn from this fountain, without having been able to exhaust it. Indeed, the deepest thinkers of all ages have meditated on the glories of God, as they are manifested in the Incarnation, and have pondered over the ineffable blessings which have flowed from this fountain-source over all creation, like the wholesome floods of a vast and bountiful river.¹ For the Incarnation is the most sublime revelation of our Great God, God's most royal master-piece, as Clement of Alexandria calls it.² In the creation of this world God has revealed especially His *power*, in the redemption especially His *love*; in the creation He appears to us in His greatness, in the redemption, beholding the Only-begotten, Who is in the bosom of the Father,³ we are enabled

¹ Hymnus Eccl. :

Terra, pontus, astra, mundus
Quo lavantur flumine !

² Paedag. I., 12.

³ John 1, 18.

28 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

to look into His *heart*; in the creation He has called on us to *share* in the things that are His own, by giving us being and life,—in grace He *gives* us what belongs to Him: supernatural intelligence and love,—and here in the Incarnation, He *gives us Himself*. No longer does man stand distant from God; God approaches him, not symbolically as He approached Noah, not merely by word of mouth, as He spoke to Moses and the prophets; not merely by His august but hidden presence, as He manifested Himself over the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple; but now He has assumed humanity, He has drawn man into unity with His own person and life, He has deified him and raised him to the very height of the divinity itself in the God-man Jesus Christ. In Christ, the new progenitor of the human family, God and man are one;¹ in Him and by Him redeemed man may now enter into the Holy of Holies of God Himself. Man is the microcosm; in him all creation is elevated into a union with his intellectual life, is humanized and spiritualized. And man in turn is elevated into union with God in the God-man Jesus. Hence it is, that all creation appears deified in the Incarnation, actually even now in the person of Christ, and to be actualized in all of us in the life to come.

¹ John 10, 30. : I and the Father are one.

The Word-made-flesh wished to complete His work in the mystery of the *Holy Eucharist*; in it He has given Himself to us under the humble species of bread and wine. In His nativity Christ became our companion, our light, our guide and our strength on the journey of life; by His death He redeemed us from sin. Forever present in the Most Holy Sacrament He has become our food, our delight, our consolation, our heaven on earth, for "this mystery" says St. John Chrysostom, "transforms earth into a heaven."¹ And by this sacrament each one of us enters into that supernatural, mysterious communion of grace and glory with Christ and the Father, which has its prototype and cause in the union of the divinity with the humanity.²

Thus we see fulfilled and satisfied in Christ all aspirations and longings of the ancient world, which sighed for its God in the dreams of the Persian and ancient Indian myths with their Avatâras and incarnations of God, in the mysteries of the Greeks, in the longings of Plato;³ and the yearnings of the venerable Simeon, who was patiently awaiting the salvation of Israel. For this reason then, the Christian religion is the consummation of all religion, the *absolute* religion. Progress beyond

¹ In 1. Cor. Homil. XXIV., 5.

² Thomas, contra gent. IV., 54.

³ De republ. II., (2, 361).

30 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Christianity is therefore impossible; for how could man be elevated higher than he has been in Christ?¹ What truths could man still assume beyond those which were vouchsafed to him in the Incarnate Word? Every so-called progress, is only an *apostasy*, a *regress* into the old notions of paganism, pantheism, atheism, materialism, an apostasy all the more to be deplored, since all the elements of truth, all the ideals of morality, which the better of the pagan world had known, are to be found in Christianity; but Christianity has explained them, complemented them, perfected them and measured them with the golden rule of eternal Truth.

There is still another point of view, which shows Christianity to be the absolute religion. All religious life has its root in *sacrifice*; sacrifice is the fundamental idea of all religions; we meet sacrifice at the very beginning of human history; sacrifice is an heir-loom, come down from times immemorial, as old, as universal, as deeply set in our hearts as the consciousness of our guilt, or as the longing for salvation from it, and for reconciliation to God. The God-made-man alone has made the reparation, He alone has paid the just price. It was *God's act*, for man's would have

¹ August., De praedest. sanct. c. 15: Praedestinata est ista naturae humanae tanta et tam celsa et summa subvectio, ut, quo attolleretur altius, non haberet.

been tainted and insufficient; and still, it was *man's act*, for only a man could deliver himself up to death. Thus do we see in the surrender of Christ for our sake, the consummation of the sacrificial idea; the *infinite* Son has offered up sacrifice to the *infinite* God, which, being of infinite value, is satisfactory for our debt. And thus has Christianity, by the help of the God-made-man, been able to establish the *highest form of worship* by giving to God, in the sacrifice of the Son, that honor which alone befits His divine Majesty, which alone is worthy of Him, because it is the adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition of the infinite Son to the infinite, eternal Father. Therefore the angels sang on Christmas-night: "Glory be to God in the highest!"

Moreover, Christ realizes and embodies in His person the idea also of *humanity*. The ancient world placed it among its ideals, but one of its greatest representatives had to confess, that it had not as yet attained life and reality.¹ And even the great champions of humanity in our own days have not been able to point out one single individual, to whom we could look up, whom we could imitate, whom we could

¹ Cicero: *Quaest. Tuscul. II.. 22*: In quo vero erit perfecta sapientia, quem adhuc nos quidem vidimus neminem, sed philosophorum sententiis, qualis hic futurus sit si modo aliquando fuerit, exponitur.

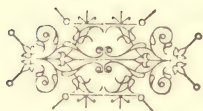
32 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

follow *one* and *all* in *all things* and *without hesitation*. Indeed, they who have thus far believed in the nobility of mankind, are the very ones to lose heart, when from beneath the veil of a brilliant education, nothing but bare, cold egotism and rudeness of mind and heart stares them in the face, when they behold a veritable abyss of falsehood and lies in those whom the world crowns with laurels. Christ is our ideal of humanity; when contemplating Him, all noble qualities in us begin to bud forth and bloom; He is the goal of all human endeavors. He has not concealed the poverty and lowliness of our nature, but, by becoming man Himself, He has endowed it with such a sublime greatness and such a superabundance of gifts, that they elevate man beyond all that the ancient world imagined, and the modern demands. "Know, O man, thy dignity," says Leo the Great.¹ "Follow me!" says Christ. He alone could have given such a command; yes, we may follow Him in everything; what mortal could have spoken such words? From Him there issues a supernatural power, which, spreading like the waters of a purifying spring, cleanses all flesh from its stains and impurities;

¹ In Nativitate sermo I., 3. : Agnosce o christiane, dignitatem tuam, et divinae consors factus naturae, noli in veterem vilitatem degeneri conversatione redire.

and like soothing oil covers man's wounds, the wounds of egotism and concupiscence, and transforms him and renews him and makes him a noble and beautiful human image, like unto the image of Christ, makes him, in a word, an image and likeness of God Himself.

Such, my dear Timothy, are the essential contents of the Christian religion, the quint-essence of our Theology.



LETTER III.

Vocation.

(Continued.)

Jesus Christ, the God-man and Saviour, is the central idea of the Christian religion and of theology. In my last letter I developed this thought and indicated the conclusions to be drawn therefrom for this life and the life to come, by each individual and by mankind in general.

And now, my dear Timothy, it will not be difficult for you to view from this elevation, the entire circle of the sciences, which in their first principles and last ends refer more or less to theology, so much so, that, as already Aristotle¹ and Clement of Alexandria call it, theology appears to us as the most excellent, nay, as the queen of sciences, around which all other sciences are grouped, being, so to speak, the human preface to the word of God. Hence also, it was the Church, that expressed the idea of a grand union of all the sciences, since they lead to God as their beginning, type and end.² She has realized this idea in

¹ Metaphys. I., 2.

² De reduct. artium ad theol. Opp. omn. ed. stud. et cura PP. Coll. a. S. Bonaventura V. (ad claras aquas 1891) 319-325.

her universities, the visible representation of the intimate relation existing among the sum-total of sciences, demonstrating to us, how the Intellect of God is portrayed in each and every branch and stage of human knowledge, and how human ideas are but the rays of Divine Truth, reflected in the human soul like sunbeams in a crystal, from the never-setting Sun of intelligence, the universal fountain-head of true light for all creatures. As the hierarchies of spirits move around their center, God, so do all sciences, consistently with the laws inherent in each, move around the central science, theology. None of them, remarks St. Bonaventure, is a stranger to theology; in it they are perfected, and by it is established their relation to that eternally shining Light, from Which they have gone forth. Therefore the university of Paris, the mother of all other universities, had its origin in a school of theology, which, desirous of penetrating more thoroughly into the depths of its own science, found it necessary to associate all the other faculties with itself; the necessity for such a step resulted from the very nature of this science. In fact, the more the intellect dives into the various other sciences, and investigates their ultimate causes and ends, the nearer does it approach those first and fundamental truths, which form a common possession, yea, con-

stitute the home and parental roof of all the other sciences, from which they all originate, a remembrance of which still lives in them, in which they meet together, notwithstanding their diversity.

The intimate connection of the intellectual sciences, *philosophy* and *theology*, need not be established any farther. The primary ideas of our intellect, the self-evident laws of thought, the universal and necessary ideas on which all science rests, and from the unalterable certainty of which every science must trace its origin, without which knowledge cannot rise beyond crude empiricism, these all indicate an *ideal* order of things, which, being in itself beyond our comprehension, bestows order and measure on all things visible. The spiritual world, the ideal world, stands high above the real, the world of the senses, and only by the intellect and its inherent laws do we scientifically understand it. We are led still deeper into the life of the intellect, by the *moral* idea, by the thought of good and evil, of law and morality. The visible order is accidental and transitory; there was a time when it did not exist, and the day will come, when it will be no more; the moral order, on the contrary, is eternal, unchangeable, necessary, as the laws of mathematics, or as the rules of logic and metaphysics. As all truth leads to God, the Rule of all truth, so does

the idea of goodness, which is impressed on our conscience, lead to God, the prototype and highest principle of all morality.

As regards the *natural sciences*, already Anaxagoras had acknowledged reason as the source of all things. All nature manifests the existence of an intellectual being, which has laid down its laws and assigned its purpose; the laws of thought, according to which we grasp this order of things and comprehend their purpose, are, at the same time, the categories of being. That which has been the cause of this order is not an unconscious or blind intelligence; for how can intelligence be blind and unconscious? Is it not a contradiction in terms, to say that an unconscious principle could have ordered and fitted all things to a definite, certain purpose? On the contrary, thought precedes all phenomena, and reveals, therefore, an all-penetrating, adjusting, absolute intelligence, which has arranged all things in their particular order, and simultaneously brought forth the laws and the things which they govern. This intelligence is God; the ultimate and best office therefore of the natural sciences can only be to decipher the hieroglyphics, which God has written in this His second book of revelations, as Bacon of Verulam¹ says, a hand-writing, not less visible in

¹ Parasc. ad hist. natur. et exper. Aphoris. IX. Leipsic ed. 1694. p. 426.

38 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

the dust of the earth, than in the starry heavens.

In a greater measure even do *jurisprudence* and *diplomacy* point to God, the origin and fountain-head of the moral idea, which, being one with Him, governs all creation, from which all justice proceeds, which is the highest principle of all legislation.¹

The laws supreme,
Which, dwelling on high in ether's
Celestial orbs, have come to us from
The bosom of father Olympus, not
Born from the frail minds of
Mortal men.²

O animals of clay! O spirits gross!
The primal will, that in itself is good,
Hath *from itself*, the chief Good, ne'er been
moved.

Justice consists in *consonance with it*,
Derivable by no created good,
Whose very cause depends upon its beam.³

For this reason all sound juridical life finds its origin in *history*; it has *come into existence*, it has not been made, having grown out of the primal consciousness of the nations and their manners, and therefore it bears in its funda-

¹ Plato, de legibus I. (2, 624). Cicero, de leg. II., 8.

² Sophocles : Oedipus rex v. 865 sqq.

³ Dante, Paradise XIX., 82 sq.

mental aspects the impress of Christianity, which has transformed the manners of the ancient Germans, and has also greatly modified and christianized the old Roman law.

History has to point out to us the road over which the human race travelled through these thousands of years after leaving the common parental roof, and narrate its vicissitudes, its aims and struggles, its defeats and victories, its regress and progress. As in a divine drama, we here find the plot developing, which, to our human eyes, appeared but to be the mechanical workings of the blind powers of the elements or of human infirmity, or as events brought about by prudent scheming, or due to the waywardness of our passions; here even the most short-sighted will become aware of the fact, that a superior hand meddles in this aimless play of human powers, apparently so confused, that a Deity rules and directs man's liberty, a Deity, in the execution of whose designs even the most rebellious must concur. No one can examine the annals of the world's history, without encountering that most sublime and most mysterious personality, that forms the center and pivot of all history, that was prepared in the preceding centuries, and from whom all subsequent centuries derive their essential character and meaning, that phenomenal personage, who has called a new world into existence—*Jesus Christ*.

40 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Wherefore, my dear Timothy, should we use many words to prove the wonderful, indissoluble union of all sciences with the principal and central-science,—theology? If Christ is truly man, *then everything truly human must be Christian.* And so it is; everything you see — art, science, nature, human life are ennobled and deified in Him. In Him all dissonances are solved, both upon the great stage of the world and within our own hearts. Science, art, justice, joy, poetry, blend together into one grand harmony. Ethics become aesthetics, *virtue, beauty.* If this truth were fully understood by all men, it would pervade the universe like the balmy zephyrs of spring, and all minds and all hearts would irresistibly soar heavenward.

I have sketched for you, in a few lines, the picture of theology. Yes, *our science is really grand.* Speculation and practice, reason and revelation, the natural and the supernatural, faith and science, the material and the spiritual world, God and man, constitute the subject of its meditation. It is the goal, to which our mind, often ignorant of the fact, is ceaselessly tending; it is the terminus, where the mind finds rest and quiet. In it all scientific researches meet; to confirm its doctrines and to explain its meaning, they all labor, who follow the paths of science. Many are cog-

nizant of this, but many more are not, nor do they wish to be; but nevertheless they labor for us, because they stand in the service of truth; but truth belongs not to them, truth is above them: *truth is of God.*

Nature that surrounds us, the soul that is within us, revelation that is above us, history that is before us, constitute the four streams as of Paradise, which irrigate the domain of the mind, the sources of man's knowledge. They all flow from one common fountain,—God.¹

Out of this fountain you must also draw, my dear Timothy; drink abundantly of its waters, fill your heart to its full capacity. Do not fear, that your zeal for this science will ever diminish, that your enthusiasm will ever weary, or your love grow cold. For that to which you aspire, which you have embraced with your whole soul is not a fancy of your imagination, nor an ebullition of your youthful emotions, which will diminish and disappear with them, nor a system of subjective ideas and views; it is *not a human fabric.*

God Himself,² Who fully and most perfectly comprehends Himself, is the archetype and exemplar of theology; as also the blessed, who in beatific vision see Him, though only

¹ Thomas, *Contra gent.* I., 7.

² *Theologia Dei.*

42 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian,*

finitely,¹ and possess in this vision their beatitude. Our earthly theology² partakes with them of the same common object, which, though revealing itself to us in a different manner, elevates us to the sphere of the supernatural, and allows us, in the light of faith, to view the world to come. To know only a little of that world, the world of God and the spirits, is by far more precious than all the knowledge we can have of the whole visible creation.³ This science of theology is a ray from the ocean of God's light, which He, in His revelation, allows to shine upon us; it is therefore as true as God Himself, eternal as the essence of God, and in its principles infallible; for it is God's word. To the blessed it is given to behold God in His glory, and to love Him in this vision, and to be blessed in His love. They, who thus drink of this water of life, shall yet thirst, says Holy Writ.⁴ So we also, who know Him in the light of faith, shall yet thirst, we also shall progress from knowledge to knowledge, from love to love,

¹ Theologia comprehensorum.

² Theologia viatorum.

³ Thomas, *Contra gent.* I., 5.: In libro primo de animalibus dicit (Aristoteles) quod, quamvis parum sit quod de substantiis superioribus percipimus, tamen id modicum est magis amatum et desideratum omni cognitione, quam de substantiis inferioribus habemus.

⁴ *Eccli.* 24, 29.

from joy to joy. Always shall we thirst anew, and always will our thirst be quenched anew, for God is such an infinite abyss of light, love and blessedness, that our mind will never be able to fathom Him, nor our knowledge, fully to comprehend Him. The longer and more intensely we study Him, the more will our mind be fertilized, the more deeply shall we gaze into eternity, where the picture of His infinite Greatness, His infinite Goodness, His infinite Beauty will be daily more and more clearly revealed to our eyes. Thus we shall enjoy here on earth a foretaste of Heaven, and our happiness will always be renewed.



LETTER IV.
Vocation.

(Concluded.)

Your resolution, my young friend, is an earnest one. You intend to choose theology as your calling, and you have confided to me the reasons which prompted you to make such a resolution. You have allowed me to view your inner self, you have unhesitatingly revealed to me the series of thoughts, which have led you to this conclusion. All things pass away; this thought, which has ever been written in your innermost soul, you have once more made the subject of a serious meditation in the quiet of solitude. All things pass away; what endures? God and I, His creature. And both shall endure forever.

What then must I do? you have asked yourself. With *God only* must I take counsel; I must listen to Him alone; I must meditate on the thoughts, which He has had concerning me from all eternity, that I may discover His designs in my regard. The world has no right to interfere, for here is a question of eternity; whatever is of the world within me or without me, must be silent; everything must be silent. The vocation of

a theologian is ideal and spiritual, and far beyond the intelligence of the human mind; how then could I hear the voice of God, if the noise of the world buzzes around my ears? How could I recognize the splendor, grandeur, and blessedness of this vocation, if earthly pictures delude me, and voices from the deep bewilder my mind?

You are right, my dear young friend, to think thus; you have done well to go into solitude, to decline to listen to the advice of shortsighted friends, to follow the voice of conscience, that voice, which never misleads, and which, at the same time, a tried spiritual director has declared to be the voice of God. The pleasure you have felt within you; the peace which was yours after coming to this conclusion; the confidence you had when the thought of death and eternity troubled you; the impulse of thanksgiving to God, Who led you forth out of all doubt and hesitation, and put your feet on the right path,—all this can only be the working of a good spirit. It will not be difficult for you now to leave everything for Christ's sake, to leave home, and brothers, and sisters, and father, and mother, and possessions, for His and His gospel's sake, for you have understood that these are all vain and transitory, and that in their place you are to receive a hundredfold.¹

¹ Mark. 10, 29. sq.

said: "Call, O Lord, I will hear; send, I will go; lead, I will follow." You have known your day. This day has been predestined for you from all eternity; all the paths you have walked since your youth, were all prepared for you to lead you hither; and your whole future, your labors and your aspirations, your consolations and your joys, your hopes and the achievements of your whole life have this day as their starting-point; and this day will continue to bear fruit in the years to come, even unto death, even unto the day of judgment. The choice of a vocation is a proceeding, which no one knows, except God alone; it is locked up and not seldom remains concealed like a precious gem in one's heart, and nobody knows of it. As a bud loves to unfold itself at night, when all is quiet, and suffers when touched by rude hands, so it is with a young man's vocation to the priesthood. Not everyone understands it, few have praise for it, and by some, whose eyes are directed earthward, it is considered, even as Christianity once was, a folly. It is an event of immeasurable efficacy, of an importance, which reaches beyond the narrow limits of human life. Is not the ideal the only real, whilst the sensible, visible and earthly is only transitory, and consequently without any lasting reality? The latter is an image only of true being, it is not

being itself, it is not lasting.¹ The invisible governs the visible; the intellectual and spiritual relations are true life, they are the soul of the visible body of this world. This was long ago intimated by our Lord in that admirable significant parable of the leaven which leavens the whole world. And now, take courage! God will give you all that is necessary and more too, if only you are faithful to Him. Heaven beholds you, the Blessed Trinity is, so to say, interested in you; the power of the Father, the wisdom of the Son, the love of the Holy Spirit created man; how much more then will They not be active, when calling and arming him with Their gifts, who is to establish in man a supernatural world, who is to build up God's kingdom on earth! And God will never regret His gifts; He will always continue to give; "a good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall He give into your bosom." And even if heavy clouds should arise on the firmament, and for hours at a time cast a gloom over your soul; be firm! he who has once seen the sun will never doubt, that the clouds will disappear, and that the sun will again cast his brilliant light into the soul. Therefore, be manful and courageous, not

¹ 1. Corinth. 7, 31. : *Præterit enim figura* (σχημα) *hujus mundi*. Ancient philosophy also realized this. Cf. Plato, *Sympos.* (3, 211); Arist., *De part. animal* I., 1. *Metaph.* VII., 3.

blown about by every wind of human sentiment; but, at the same time, do not vain-gloriously confide in your own strength. Strength comes from above, and it is humility, which successfully implores it.

So far I have spoken of your theological vocation; but, my dear Timothy, the Catholic theologian is more than a teacher and a scholar, he is more than a scientist. He is a *priest*, and theological science must qualify him for his high vocation. He is to renew the sacrifice of Christ, from which all graces flow over all mankind. In Christ's stead he is to enter the sanctuary, he must hold Him, Who is the price of our redemption, in his hands; he must offer to the Father the Lamb without blemish, Who has been longed for from the beginning of the world, Who bears the sins of the world. He, who has sacrificed Himself on Calvary, wishes to sacrifice Himself constantly on our altars in a mystical manner by the hands of the priest. All our altars are but *one* altar, all priests but *one* priest, all sacrifices but *one* sacrifice, the grand propitiatory sacrifice of the world, which day and night cries to the Father for mercy. There is now no sin, which the Father, appeased by this sacrifice, will not forgive;¹ there is now no grace,

¹ Conc. Trident. Sess. XXII., c. 2.: Hujus (sacrificii) oblatione placatus Dominus gratiam et donum poenitentiae concedens, crimina et peccata etiam ingentia dimittit.

50 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

which cannot be obtained by this sacrifice for our benefit and for that of the Church; there is no soul, which, when sprinkled with the Blood of this Lamb, does not become clean and regenerated and endowed with supernatural strength. As in heaven the choirs of angels and the blessed gather around the Lamb, and offer to Him a sacrifice of adoration, and lay down their crowns before Him, Who is worthy to receive honor and praise and benediction and glory¹ for ever and ever, so does here on earth the whole Church assemble around our altar; here, around the altar the Church Militant is an anticipation of the Church Triumphant, for here does she behold Him, Who has conquered the world, death and the devil. In Him we have our heaven; for what is heaven but God and Christ, Who sitteth in His glory at the right hand of the Father? It is only the veil of the species, which separates the Church Militant from the Church Triumphant; at some future time this veil will be withdrawn, and then we shall see Him face to face, Whom we have here adored, veiled in the sacrament.

Thus, at the altar, all supernatural life is kindled in the soul of man, thus the priest at the altar stands in the center of the world of grace. As the rivers of Paradise went out

¹ Apoc. 5, 6. sq.; 8, 11. sq.

toward the east and the west, and the north and the south, thus the stream of salvation, flowing forth from beneath the altar, rushes to quench the poor and parched earth, and every creature may now drink of the fountain of grace, and every blessing and grace has come to man by this sacrifice, in the great stirring events of history, as well as in the hidden life of the just, and in the last sigh of the dying.

For this reason, as Pope Innocent III. remarks in his exposition of the Mass, do we find Holy Mass so replete with divine mysteries, so full of truly divine sweetness. It is only when we endeavor to sound the depth of this mystery, that we can form an idea of the grandeur and sublimity of the office of the priest, who has been called to officiate at this mystical celebration, so replete with grand thoughts, so full of solemnity and unction and grace and sublimity. "Open Thou my eyes", says the Psalmist, "and I will consider the wondrous things of Thy law".¹ The divine service of the Old Testament had in its sacrifices a deep, mysterious significance, as St. Paul declares in his epistle to the Hebrews. As the sacrifice of the Old Law typically directs our eyes to the great future sacrifice, so does the sacrifice of the altar point back to the

¹ Ps. 118, 18.

bloody sacrifice of the cross. The sacrifices of the Old Law were at once figurative and typical, and therefore symbolical and mystical. The New Law has its symbolism and mysticism, which are the forms and figures of the ideas and relations of our worship to its sublime center, — Christ as Victim. If in the Old Law the most insignificant detail of divine worship was not without a deeper meaning, how much more is not this the case with the liturgy of the Church, particularly with that of Holy Mass! Rather let us say, that as nature testifies to the power and wisdom and greatness of God the Creator, not only in its imposing masses and formidable aspects, but equally as well in its smallest formations, so, in like manner, the Fathers and the Church explain the importance and deep significance of those symbols in the holy mystery, which superficial minds may deem meaningless or even irrelevant. Vigilantius in the fifth century, found fault with the use of candles at Mass, and the Monothelites objected to the mixing of water with wine at the offertory; and it is just this, as St. Cyprian says,¹ which signifies the union of the two natures in Christ. The Church herself in the blessing of the holy vestments, indicates their higher signification.

¹ Epist. 63.

For you therefore, my young friend, there cannot be found a better preparation, than to ponder over the mysteries of this all-holy sacrifice. The Church herself asks us to do so; she wishes that the majesty of this sacrifice should appear more mighty and effective to us by its symbolism, and that the faithful soul should be induced to rise to the meditation of the Most High and the Most Holy.¹ If the sacrifice of the Mass is the renewal of the work of the redemption by Christ, a commemoration of His passion and death, then Christ, who has bestowed Himself with the fulness of His grace upon the Church, must be present here; His death on the cross was the climax of the redemption; the climax of the Mass therefore must be the consecration, — the unbloody, but real representation of that death; from this point then you will be able to grasp the meaning of what precedes and what follows consecration; you will be able to estimate the grandeur and preëminence of the priestly office, which administers such mysteries. The mysteries of His life prepare for His death; the merit of His immolation, resurrection and glory we celebrate in the

¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. XXII., c. 5.: Quod et majestas tanti sacrificii commendaretur, et mentes fidelium per hæc visibilia religionis et pietatis signa ad rerum altissimarum, quæ in hoc sacrificio latent, contemplationem excitarentur.

54 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Communion. Thus we find the threefold office of Christ represented in the Mass: His office of prophet in the Missa Catechumenorum, which teaches and prepares us for the reception of truth; His priesthood in the Consecration; His royalty in the Communion.¹ Faith corresponds to the office of prophet, hope of forgiveness, to the priesthood, love in Holy Communion, to the office of king.

All the members of the Church take part in this act of redemption, which Christ in His threefold office exercises by the hands of the priest. The redemption extends its benignant power unto the uttermost parts of the earth, to sprinkle all with the blood of Christ, to draw all into the current of grace; to make of us all building-stones for the great temple of God among men, a temple infinitely grander and more imposing than the visible temple, in which these mysteries are celebrated. The life of the Church, and the life of all men through the Church becomes a sacrificial life with the Victim, united with It and with one another, and symbolized by that *one* bread. Therefore the Holy Sacrifice is offered over the body of martyrs, who have given their lives for Christ. In that *one* bread,² prepared from many grains, we

¹ Can. miss. : Ob memoriam passionis, resurrectionis et ascensionis.

² 1. Cor., 10, 17.

behold the universal Church Militant, which, united with Christ, sacrifices itself on the altar; "taught by Christ, she learns to sacrifice herself", says St. Augustine.¹ Thus does *liturgy educate unto asceticism*, which latter is nothing else than a process, by which the faithful assimilate and become one with their sacrificed Head. Thus the Holy Mass becomes the central idea and focus, in which all holy life in the Church meets, from whence all power and every impulse toward higher life proceeds.

The process of the redemption of mankind, like the redemption and sanctification of each individual, traverses three stages: the stage of *purgation, illumination* and *union* — via purgativa, illuminativa, unitiva. Holy Mass comes to a close in the Communion; the whole Church, and each individual, enters into a most intimate union of body and life with Christ, when, after making the solemn confession, the grand 'Confiteor', she offers herself at the Offertory, thereby signifying a denial and mortification of the old man in us; and when she unites herself to Him in His mystical death to rise one day with Him unto the glory of life eternal.

Thus we find in the Mass an *illustration* of

¹ De civit. Dei, X., 20: Cujus rei sacramentum quotidianum esse voluit Ecclesiae sacrificium, quae cum ipsius capitis corpus sit, se ipsam per ipsum discit offerre.

human life, from the doleful cry for mercy resounding from the depth of separation from God, to the rejoicings and benedictions of mankind, fed with the body and blood of the Lord; Mass is the history of the great life of the Church in all the phases of time and place; the priest at the altar occupies the center of the world. Behold the habitation of God with man! Once more this poor and thornstrewn earth becomes a paradise and a vestibule of heaven, and angels assist the priest and bow down reverently before Him, Whom the hands of the priest hold up for adoration.

Therefore the Mass is a divine worship, a λειτουργία in an eminent degree, the pulsation of all supernatural and holy life of the Church, the consecrating element of all devotion, our sun of grace on earth, whence light and warmth and life shall proceed for evermore. In the sacraments and sacramentals blessings are conferred on the creature by virtue of the altar; in every Holy Mass creation is again redeemed, and through the sacraments this redemption penetrates every order of life on earth, the individual as well as the social (priesthood, matrimony), and elevates and spiritualizes them and lifts them up into a higher supernatural sphere. The sacrifice of the Old Law was a type of Christ's

death; so also is the sacrifice of the Mass a reproduction of that bloody sacrifice, and at the same time, an exemplar and anticipation of that future complete offering of universal redeemed creation, in its Head and Highpriest to God the Father¹ in everlasting union, which no hostile power can any longer disturb. Thus is Holy Communion a symbol and, at the same time, a cause of that future state, in which we shall behold God face to face. And therefore we pray in the Post-communio: *Fac nos, quaesumus Domine, Divinitatis tuae sempiterna fruitione repleri, quam pretiosi corporis et sanguinis tui temporalis perceptio praefigurat.*²

And now, my young friend, you will also understand the importance of the second and not less important duty of the priest, *to preach*; you will understand the place of the sermon in Catholic worship, and its connection with the Holy Sacrifice.

The prophetic office of Christ is indissolubly connected with His priestly and royal office. This threefold power has passed from Christ to His apostles and their successors. The Word-made-flesh, dwelling among us, "full of grace and truth", still lives in the priesthood of the Church. As the hands of the priest hold the Eternal Victim, the true

¹ 1. Cor. 15, 23-25.

² Missa de Sanct. Euch. Sacram.

body of the Lord, and show it to the people, so his mouth announces the eternal truth, which Christ has brought down to earth, building up thus, both by sermon and sacrament, the mystical body of Christ, — the Church. As Christ, the Highpriest, offers Himself to the Father by the hands of the priest, so He is likewise the prophet Who speaks through his mouth. And as He, Who was made man, comprises in Himself the height and depth of all Christian science and truth, so He likewise is, by the word of the priest speaking in His name and sent by Him as the representative of the Church and of Christ, the infallible teacher of faith, the leader of the holy people, the beacon-light showing the way to God, looking up to which the faithful will be guarded and protected, be the voice of heresy ever so contradictory and the floods of unbelief ever so powerful.

With earnestness and confidence then, with an ennobling, unalterable certitude dedicate yourself to that Spirit, Who is able to change the bread and wine in the Most Holy Sacrifice, Who, as the Spirit of Truth, operates and rules in His holy Church, and hence also renders the teachers of the Church, who, as men, are so weak and exposed to so much error, “instruments”, as Augustine says, “of the strongest, most invincible and most persevering faith”.

The preacher of the Church, then speaks with that authority, which Christ gave to her when He sent forth His apostles to preach the Gospel and promised them His aid until the end of days; he speaks with the authority of God Himself, Who has commanded him to preach, and has placed the words of the Gospel on his lips. It is by preaching that faith is to be prepared, grace to enter the hearts of men and the foundation to be laid for the work of salvation. There is a law in the kingdom of God, that the preaching of God's word is accompanied by grace; the sermon is the seed planted from without, God works within. Hence it is a duty of all, to listen to the word, in order, by the word, to arrive at faith.¹ When Lydia listened to the sermon of St. Paul, God opened her heart, so that she believed.² This instance was to be of fundamental significance for all time to come. Faith cometh by hearing; how then shall they call on Him, of Whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?³ "Woe is me, if I preach not", says the prophet;⁴ "for we cannot but speak", said the apostles.⁵

¹ Mark. 16, 15, sq.

² Acts. 16, 14.

³ Rom. 10, 14.

⁴ Isa. 6, 5.

⁵ Acts. 4, 20.

Therefore the Church has always regarded preaching as the first of the episcopal duties. And justly so. As in Christ we find the prophet and the priest combined in His person, thus also there exists an intimate relation between the Word-made-flesh, His real body, and His mystical body, the Church. The Church is the womb, in which the spirit of Christ gives birth to the "new creature", by the word of the gospel. By this word the Word again assumes, as it were, a human form: "*Sermonem constituens vivificatorem eundem etiam carnem suam dixit.*"¹ By and in the word of the sermon, Christ continues mystically to live in, to build, to propagate, to illumine, to console, to grant favors to His Church; He continues the work of redemption through every century, feeding our souls with the word of truth, even as He makes those one with Himself who receive Him in the Eucharist. The sermon has no other office than to translate into human speech this word of God, to explain it, to apply it. If therefore the sermon pierces the heart, and, like a sword, penetrates the "joints and the marrow,"² and reaches unto the division of the soul and the spirit, it is because it is the word of God, and not the word of man. If the sermon opened the

¹ Tertul., de resurrect. carnis. c. 37.

² Hebr. 4, 12.

heart of man to the light of faith, if it gave courage to the martyrs, and made heroines of delicate women, if it christianized Europe and reformed her morals, if it peopled the deserts with saints, if it gave strength to the weak, consolation to the afflicted, peace to the troubled and fortitude to the wavering, it was the word of God that did it, in whose service the human word had placed itself, acting as an humble hand-maid. If the word of God constitutes not the life-giving spirit, the very heart and soul of the sermon, it will be nothing but sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal, although man may consider it a master-piece of eloquence. The sermon goes forth from the altar; from the altar therefore flames of fire must descend into the soul of the priest, that it may glow with holy love; here at the altar he receives grand, eternal, divine thoughts, which will penetrate his soul with wonderful power and clearness. And grand thoughts will create grand sermons; the divine thoughts, which kindle zeal in his breast and eloquence upon his lips, will testify, that he has been sent by God.

Now, my dear Timothy, you will understand, what the priesthood of the Catholic Church is, what the altar is, to which as a priest you will ascend every morning, as Moses ascended the holy mountain. It is

another Bethlehem, to which the Son of God descends, and not merely in the form of a helpless child: nay, He desires to hide all His glory, and invisibly, under the species of bread, to abandon Himself to the hands of the priest; here we have another Emmaus, where He dwells with us, and our hearts burn, whilst He speaks to us, although He is still hidden from our view; here we have another Golgotha, where, with Mary and John, we stand beneath the cross; here we have Good Friday's sorrow and Easter's rejoicing, for He has arisen and dies no more. Here heaven and earth meet; behold the rising sun of grace, which illumines the cloudy night of our earthly existence, and transfigures and deifies everything. Now earth is no more a cemetery, strewn with the bones of millions, who have gone before us: God dwells upon it, and thus it has become a holy land.

What now is the priest? Selected from among men, he is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices to God.¹ And what kind of a sacrifice? When a bishop is about to consecrate a church, what elaborate preparations are required, and how are employed all the means at the disposal of our worship! And yet this is only a house of stone. What grand preparations does the Church make, when she is

¹ Hebr. 7, 26; 8, 3.

about to ordain a priest ! Behold, how plainly and yet how powerfully she there pays tribute to the excellence and sublimity of the priesthood ! Seven times she leads the candidate up to the altar, from head to foot she clothes him with sacred vestments, in the presence of the clergy and of the laity, who give testimony to his worthiness, she proclaims the grand dignity of the priest. The whole Church offers prayers on the days set apart for the conferring of Holy Orders, the bishop is on his knees, as Christ was once on Mt. Olivet ; he prays to the Father, as Christ once prayed for His disciples. They, who are to be ordained, are prostrate, while the Litany of All Saints is chanted ; and thus they offer themselves as victims, that they may become worthy priests of the Lord. And now, when all are silent, the bishop imposes his hands on those to be ordained, and the clergy present do likewise. A sublime moment ! an eloquent silence ! how could human words express, what now takes place in those souls !

With ever varying prayers the bishop invests the priest with stole and chasuble, the symbols of sacrifice and charity ; he anoints the priest's hands, in order "that the things which he shall bless, may be blessed, and the things which he shall consecrate may be consecrated and sanctified." What more could

the Church do than she does in conferring Holy Orders? What now is the priest? A miracle of grace, a living temple of God, in which He has deposited the greatest powers ever bestowed on man. We honor a place of pilgrimage, we esteem a reliquary; but what are these when compared to the sacredness of a priest, who in very deed has become a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit! The *mouth* of a priest, how powerful is the word, that it utters, the holiest word spoken in heaven and on earth! It calls down the Son of God upon the altar, — a new, supernatural creation, as it were, made visible by the word of the priest to our eyes. The *tongue* of the priest, daily moistened by the blood of the Most Holy! The *eyes* of the priest! They see, what so many have desired to see and have not seen; they see Him, under the veil of the species indeed, but nevertheless they see Him, true, real and substantial. The *hands* of the priest! The Holy Oils have been spread over them, they have become a throne, upon which the great God is seated, an oblation-cup, filled with heavenly gifts, which rises on high, to call down upon man the mercies of God. The *heart* of the priest! Who can tell, what the heart of a true priest is? It is an altar, upon which, with the offering of the Son, he daily offers himself; it is a manger, a sepulchre, in

which the Lord rests. *Agnoscite, quod agitis, imitamini, quod tractatis, quatenus mortis Dominicae mysterium celebrantes mortificare membra vestra a vitiis et concupiscentiis omnibus procuretis*; thus speaks the Church to the priest at his ordination.

There are two things which Christ has done to redeem the world: having died for our sins, He arose for our justification.¹ The priesthood therefore necessarily bears two signatures, the one of death and the other of life: of mystical death in the sacrifice, of supernatural life, by drinking continuously of this fountain of life; and herein he possesses, here on earth, a foretaste of heaven. He has relinquished his claims on earth, and for it has received heaven; he has abandoned his soul to God, and has received a hundredfold in return. To die to the world and to live with Christ, this is the priestly vocation, this is sacerdotal life. What the apostle proclaimed to all the faithful, applies above all to the priest, who daily celebrates the death of the Lord. "You are dead."² There is no need of a shroud, no need of a desert Thebaid; in the flush of youth, in the midst of the world he is dead, for his heart belongs no more to it, his hopes and desires are no

¹ Rom. 4, 25.

² Col. 3, 3.

more of this earth. Yes, dead; but only that in him is dead, which was low, earthly and transitory; "and your life is hid in God."

How great does not the priest become, how near to his God! There is silent peace in his heart; the censure of the world, its praise, its contempt, its hatred, no longer have an effect on that heart; for it rests in its God; in Him and with Him it is above the world. "Your life is hid in God," in the bosom of eternal truths, of intense divine light; he views the world only in this light, and therefore he sees it as it is, transitory and deceitful; he wishes no longer to gaze upon it, he turns away his eyes, "that they may not behold vanity."¹ God only does he wish to see, and by God only to be seen. "And your life is hid with Christ in God." "In Christ are hid all the treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God."² They are hidden under the sacramental species, as they were once hidden under the humble form of the babe in the manger. What is poorer than a poor, weak child? What is more common than bread? With Christ therefore the priest wishes to be hidden, even though he were to relinquish everything, honor, reputation, station, possession, never can he so renounce himself, so hide himself, as Christ has done.

¹ Ps. 118, 37.

² Col. 2, 3.

“When Christ shall appear, Who is your life; then you also shall appear with Him in glory.”¹ The priest seeks not honor; he wishes to remain hidden, as long as Christ remains so; he seeks not distinction, nor esteem, nor praise, nor gain, for all this is vain, because Christ despised them, did not seek them; in a hidden life does the priest find his rest, his protection against the dangers of the world. When Christ shall appear, he also shall appear; he will be resplendent in the reflection of Christ’s glory. Here he lives as unknown and yet known, for he is known to God; regarded by the world as refuse, he is a treasure in the eyes of God. The world believes him sorrowful, and yet he is joyful, for he bears God in his heart, and in Him an inexhaustible fountain of joy.

Do not fear, my dear Timothy, that the burden of the sacred priesthood will be too heavy for your shoulders. True, it is a great and exalted dignity, an office of dreadful responsibility, so say the Fathers and spiritual writers. God knows your weakness, He will strengthen you with His grace; He knows your poverty and impotence, but He also knows your good will. Prostrate yourself before Him, the Highpriest, bow down

¹ Col. 3, 4.

68 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

before Him in humility and confidence. Let silence reign within you; speak not to Him, but let Him speak to you; listen to what He says to you; you are alone, He says, but I will be with you; you are weak, but I will be your strength; you are poor, but I will be your wealth. When you hunger, I will satiate you; when you mourn, I will console you; when you stumble, I will raise you up. I will give you to eat of the tree of life, which is in the Paradise of God.¹



¹ Apoc. 2, 7.

LETTER V.

The Study of Philosophy.

No one can wrest from Catholic theology the credit due to it for having carried on the study of philosophy, in the Middle Ages as well as during the subsequent period of intellectual sterility, begotten by sensualism and materialism. "Theologus, ergo et philosophus," has always been an undisputed axiom of the scholastics. The encyclical of Leo XIII. "Aeterni Patris," Aug. 4. 1879, has added a new leaf to the laurels of Catholic philosophy. Received with respect by all, even by the enemies of the Papacy and of the Church, it ushered in a new epoch in the history of philosophic study.

First of all let us ask: *What is philosophy?* In my first letters I dwelt somewhat on this subject. Let us listen to the words of St. Thomas: *Illa scientia est maxime intellectualis, quae circa principia maxime universalis versatur. Quae quidem sunt ens, et ea, quae consequuntur ens, ut unum et multa, potentia et actus.*¹ Thus philosophy is the

¹ In libr. Metaphys. ; Prooemium.

science of being. Starting from the particular (particulare), it proceeds to the universal; from phenomena to the essence (universale); but to comprehend fully the essence, we must first understand its ultimate causes.¹ Therefore many have defined philosophy as the knowledge of things in their ultimate causes. Being is twofold: the infinite and the finite, the divine and the human; philosophy is therefore also termed the science of divine and human things.² From the final causes of things we discover their destiny; this knowledge is *wisdom*, and since it is acquired by the natural light of reason, it is called natural or profane wisdom,³ in opposition to the knowledge acquired by the supernatural light of revelation, which we term divine wisdom, or theology.

It will not now be difficult for you to understand the difference between philosophy and theology, especially since I have pointed it out in former letters. Above all, this difference lies in the dissimilarity of the *principles of cognition*; the principles of philosophy, like those of mathematics, are certain by their very nature; by the light of reason we recognize them immediately, direct-

¹ Arist., *Metaph.* I, 2; Thomas, *Quaest. disput.*, De potentia, q. 1. art. 4.

² Cicero, *Tuscul. disp.* V., 3.

³ Thomas: *Contra gent.* I., 1.

ly and in themselves; theology, on the other hand, receives the first principles, on which its science rests, from revelation. The *object* also of both sciences is different. "There are, it is true, many truths," as Leo XIII. says, "which even the pagans, guided by reason, have understood and proved; but the object of theology is not only God, in as far as He is known by the innate powers of our intellect, but especially in as far as He is known by the revelations He has made to us." And for this reason the kind and degree of *certitude* is different in both sciences. In philosophy this certitude is the fruit of immediate or mediate cognition arrived at by one's own powers; in theology it is the fruit of faith; there it is natural and human, here supernatural and divine; there it is fallible, because human, here it partakes of God's own infallibility, being, like God Himself, divine. Theology, it is true, cannot claim this divine certitude for all the theses (*conclusiones theologicae*), which it draws by theological conclusions from the infallible and supreme principles, because they can be established only by dialectical means; but nevertheless, with respect to certitude, theology stands above philosophy, because its fundamental premises are divinely certain.

Philosophy bases its foundations on the

72 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

innate powers of man, which were given simultaneously with the human intellect, and finds its terminus where the view of our human intellect reaches its final limit. Faith and also theology take human reason into their service, for, “*credere non possemus, si animas rationales non haberemus*,” says St. Augustine;¹ but the energetic principle of faith and theology is grace, which illumines the understanding and moves the will to assent; for “*credere non potest homo, nisi volens*.”² However, these two sciences, that of reason and that of faith, differ not only in their origin, but also in their goal. Both strive to acquire the knowledge of God as the highest truth and the ultimate cause of things; but philosophy does it mediately and by abstraction (*cognitio Dei abstracta, mediata, discursiva*), theology, immediately and in itself (*cognitio Dei immediata, directa, et in se.*) Knowing God here on earth but imperfectly, faith will arrive at a perfect *knowledge*, when we shall see God face to face.³

In this sense the ancient Fathers, as well as the Church in these latter days, and especially the Vatican Council, have explained the

¹ Epist. 120 ad Consentium, c. 1, 3.

² August., In Joan. Tr. 26, 2.

³ Thomas, Summ. I., q. 1. art. 1—5.

differences between philosophy and theology, and the points they have in common.¹

You will understand likewise, my young friend, why philosophy and theology, though *differing* from one another, are not *opposed* to each other. Human reason is but an image of the divine reason, and hence cannot be opposed to God; consequently reason and revelation, philosophy and theology differ from one another, but are not antagonistic. For this very reason the Church has always been able to do justice to those elements of truth and morality, which she found in previous ages and among the peoples outside of her fold, and to bring the treasures of knowledge thus found among the ancients into the service of Christianity, a thought beautifully developed by the immortal Moehler.² Orthodox Lutheranism has judged differently in this matter. Luther held, that since the fall of man, human reason had become "stone and stark blind" with regard to all divine things, and if reason should nevertheless presume to have her voice heard in the premises, she will everlastingly err and blunder; in fact, according to him, reason, when left to herself, is the greatest enemy of God, and, constantly raising doubts and exceptions to His truths and command-

¹ De fide cath. cc. 2, 3, 4.

² Das Heidenthum, Hist.-polit. Blätter, Vol. II. (1838) p. 185 sqq.

ments, she becomes so much the more hostile as she is the more talented. It is quite evident, that under such a supposition it is absolutely impossible to understand the life of the ancients, and that we must deny them any knowledge of God, or of the moral law, and look upon the very natural virtues of the pagans as "shining vices," to use an expression of Melanchthon. Indeed, the view, which Protestantism takes of the world is a totally mistaken one, for it maintains that by Adam's fall sin has come upon the whole human race, and that not even Christ's grace is able to free us from the sinful nature we have inherited; that for this reason man, even after the redemption, remains in sin and Christ's justice is only imputed to him externally, if he have faith, and thus merely covers his sins.

How vastly different are not the designs of God toward man shown forth in the Catholic doctrine! From the very beginning grace is built on nature as its foundation and groundwork; *gratia supponit naturam*, is an axiom of theology. And for this very reason grace does not deny or destroy nature, but perfects and completes it. Both, grace and nature, strive to attain that one end of all divine works, namely, God's honor and His creature's happiness.

Why do we study philosophy?

Our Holy Father answers this question. He says: "Since the minds of the faithful are often deceived and the purity of religion stained by worldly wisdom and vain deceit¹, the pastors of the Church have always regarded it as their duty to encourage true science with all their power, and to watch diligently, that every branch of human science be taught according to the maxims of the Catholic Church, especially *philosophy*, on the rightful understanding of which the other sciences are founded. . . . The importance of the subject and the condition of the times urge us to discuss with you the mode according to which philosophical studies are to be carried on, so that the claims of faith be satisfied, and the dignity of human reason be rightly set forth."

"Whosoever has studied the sad condition of our days and diligently contemplated the state of public and private life, will recognize, that the real cause of all the evils which oppress or threaten us, is to be found in the fact, that pernicious teachings about things, divine and human, which have long ago gone forth from the schools of philosophy, have found their way, and been favorably received into all classes of society. Since it is the nature of man to regard reason as the guide

¹ Coll. 2, 8.

76 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

of his actions, an error of the mind will easily lead to an aberration of the will; and thus it happens, that erroneous ideas, which have their seat in the mind, influence and vitiate human actions. We do not, indeed, ascribe to human philosophy such an influence and so great a power as to think it capable of overcoming and of eradicating all errors. . . . We should not despise human means, nor regard them as of little value; and among all these human means, the right use of philosophy is the most eminent. For not without cause has God implanted in the human mind the light of reason; and the additional light of faith, far from annihilating or encumbering this natural light of reason, perfects and strengthens it, and renders it capable of higher and loftier aspirations. Accordingly the plan of Divine Providence demands, that we make use of the assistance offered by human science in order to lead back the nations to faith and salvation, a praiseworthy and wise endeavor, which, according to the testimony of antiquity, was generally made by the greatest Fathers of the Church. These Fathers were accustomed to assign to reason a task of no small importance, a task briefly summarized by the great St. Augustine, when he remarks of this science, that *“by it a very wholesome faith is engendered,*

begotten, nourished, defended and strengthened."¹

In a threefold manner, Leo XIII. explains, does philosophy serve as a preparation to theology; for, first of all, philosophy prepares the *way for faith* by dealing with those truths, which have "partly been proposed to our belief by God, and partly are intimately connected with the doctrines of faith, and which have been set forth and proved by weighty arguments, even by the pagan philosophers of antiquity. Moreover, it leads us to the *knowledge of God's existence*, and, by analogy, of His *essence*; and discovering God to be the Most Truthful, it also teaches reason the *duty to believe* in God, Who by His divine authority is most worthy of belief. Lastly, it demonstrates that the truths of the Gospel have been made evident by *miraculous signs*, which are conclusive proofs of the established truth, that the faithful therefore must necessarily submit their reason and their judgment to divine authority with an obedience perfectly compatible with reason itself; also, that the Church established by Christ is a great and permanent motive of credibility and an indisputable testimony of her divine mission because of her wonderful propagation, her most eminent

¹ De Trinit. XIV., 3.

holiness and inexhaustible fertility, everywhere unfolded, and her Catholic unity and invincible firmness.”¹

Thus philosophy lays the *foundation*; but its task does not end here. For the different parts of theology must be made an *organic whole*, and its different divisions established according to correct principles, deducted from the fundamental truths, and properly connected with one another. “Nor must philosophy neglect to study more carefully the revealed truths and to dive *deeper* into the very mysteries of faith. This is a pursuit which has been praised and followed by St. Augustine and the rest of the Fathers, and which the Vatican Council² has also proclaimed to be very useful. This knowledge will surely be more perfectly and easily attained by those who unite purity of life and zeal for the faith with a mind trained in the principles of philosophical discipline, since the aforesaid Vatican Council teaches us, that an understanding of the holy doctrines should be obtained, both by an analogy from what we know through the natural light of reason, and by the mutual relation which the mysteries themselves bear to one another and to the ultimate destiny of man.”

¹ Conc. Vat. Const. Dogm. de fide cath. cap. 3.

² Conc. Vat. I. c. cap. 4.

Lastly the Holy Father indicates, that it is the office of the philosopher to *defend* the revealed truths, and to oppose those who venture to impugn them. "It is true," says Clement of Alexandria,¹ "that the doctrine of the Redeemer is perfect, and is in need of nothing, because it is God's own wisdom and power. The accession of Greek philosophy, therefore, does not strengthen the truth; but since it weakens the arguments of the sophists, and repels their attacks against the truth, it is called a suitable fence and wall of the vineyard."

Moreover, we know that the enemies of Catholicity generally draw their arguments from philosophy to combat religion; therefore the defenders of religion on their part should make use of philosophy to refute these arguments. For this reason the Church has not only countenanced, but also commanded the teachers of spiritual science to employ philosophy for the defense of faith. The fifth Lateran Council,² having defined, that every thesis contradictory to the tenets of divine faith is false, because truth cannot contradict truth, commands the teachers of philosophy to take a special interest in solving fallacious objections, since, as St. Augustine

¹ Stromata I., 20.

² Conc. Lat. Sess. VIII. Const. "Apost. regiminis."
(Mansi, Concilia IX., 1719 sq.)

observes, every argument brought against the authority of the Holy Scriptures, be it ever so subtle, deceives us only by its semblance of truth; for it cannot be true.¹

Briefly summarizing all we have thus far been told about philosophy by the very highest of authorities, we arrive at the conclusion, that the office of philosophy is, to act as a *preamble* to theology.² And it fulfils its office by treating rationally those truths which belong to the sphere of reason as well as to the domain of faith.³ It is furthermore of such a great importance for theology, because it develops the logical and ontological laws and regulations on which rests every science, including also theology. An indubitable authority in this matter is Father Suarez; in the midst of his theological studies he found it necessary to interrupt them and finish his work on metaphysics, in order, as he explains, to furnish a scientific basis for his theology.⁴

¹ August. Ep. 143 ad Marcellinum, c. 7.

² *Praeambula fidei.* Clem. Alex., Strom. I., 5.: Thomas, Summa I., q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

³ Conc. Vat. De fide cath. c. 2, can. 1.: Si quis dixerit, Deum unum et verum, creatorem et dominum nostrum per ea, quae facta sunt, naturali humanae rationis lumine certo cognosci non posse, a. s. This rational cognition is confirmed and perfected by faith. Cf. Conc. Vat. l. c. can. 4.: (Fides) illustrat rationem, confirmat, perficit. Encycl. Pii IX. d. 9. Nov. 1846.

⁴ Metaphys. (Moguntiae 1600). Prooemium: Quemadmodum fieri nequit, ut quis theologus perfectus evadat,

The specifically theological terms and notions would not and could not be understood, without the analogous ones of philosophy. The human mind cannot grasp and explain the revealed truths, unless it be in human speech, in human form and in human mode of understanding. The fundamental notions of substance, subsistence, nature, essence, form, cause, etc. have been taken from philosophy, and find an analogous application in the theses of theology. Every dogma regarding God's essence and attributes presupposes a definite notion of God; every dogma regarding the world, man, sin and redemption, presupposes a definite idea of creation, definite anthropology and ethics.

Thus philosophy principally serves theology by proving the fundamental truths of natural religion and morality: God, the soul, immortality, liberty, virtue etc.; in the next place, by demonstrating the necessity of divine revelation and establishing the motives of its credibility; thirdly, by presenting the logical and

nisi firma prius metaphysicae jecerit fundamenta, ita intellexi semper, operae pretium fuisse, ut antequam theologica scriberem commentaria opus hoc diligenter elaboratum praemitterem In dies tamen luce clarius intuebar, quam illa divina ac supernaturalis theologia hanc humanam et naturalem desideraret et requireret; adeo ut non dubitaverim illud inchoatum opus paulisper intermittere, quo huic doctrinae metaphysicae suum quasi locum ac sedem darem, vel potius restituerem.

ontological laws, by means of which the mind understands the contents of divine revelation; fourthly, by constructing the truths of faith into a scientific and organical edifice, and, lastly, by contributing its share towards transmitting and defending, on a scientific basis, the dogmas of theology.

Do not fear, my young friend, that we derogate from the dignity of philosophy, when we speak of it as the hand-maid of theology. It is true, the axiom of the schools: *philosophia est theologiae ancilla*, sounds harsh and therefore has been very much censured. Kant considered it the hand-maid of theology, not because it carried the trail of theology after her, but because it carried the light before her, leading the way. We also may admit this interpretation, in so far as the natural light of reason lends a helping hand to theology. And, after all, this axiom ought not to have been taken too strictly, since it is but an accommodation of the scriptural words;¹ philosophy, the daughter of heaven, is free-born. If, according to Aristotle, all philosophical disciplines show the way to philosophical theology² and find in it their conclusion, if all sciences but serve the truth, if the whole creation and the world's history are ordained by God to carry out His plans and destined

¹ Prov. 9, 3; cf. Thomas, *Summa* I., q. 1, a. 5.

² *Metaph.* VI., 1; XI., 7.

to promote the ultimate end of all things, then indeed all science and literary research must necessarily lead us, in a greater or smaller degree, to Him, Who is the goal and end of all things; they must serve the truth, serve the divinity, for God is truth.

We have thus far spoken only of the value and dignity of philosophy in general. If you cast a rapid glance over the history of all philosophical efforts, you will meet with an indisputable truth. The philosophy taught from the time of the ancient Fathers up to the 18th century, agreeing in the fundamental questions, but differing in minor points, sometimes to a great extent, is totally distinct, both as regards contents and method, from the philosophical systems, which, originating with a Descartes, have come down to us, constantly combating one another, and constantly changing. Descartes placed himself in direct opposition to the philosophy, which up to his time had been taught in the Catholic schools. He based his system on a foundation altogether new, on his celebrated 'Cogito, ergo sum.' Locke, the empiricist, and Hume, the sceptic, of England, Spinoza, the pantheist in Holland, who was improved upon by Schelling and Hegel, and the Critical Idealism of Kant, have all gone forth from Cartesianism as from a fatal Pandora's box, each according to the

particular direction, in which it has been developed. Thus Descartes is, as it were, the trade-mark of the new philosophy. But what characterizes it especially is the fact, that it *originated from Protestantism and Rationalism*. Although philosophy is, in principle, directly opposed to orthodox Protestantism — orthodox Protestantism ignored philosophy — still, *modern* Protestantism is closely allied to modern philosophy. For whatever Protestantism possesses of a scientific nature, it is indebted to modern philosophy for it (Kant, Spinoza-Schleiermacher, Schelling, Hegel, Neo-Kantianism); without it, it would long since have become a mummy. Neither crude empiricism, nor doubt, nor the all-deifying pantheism can satisfy the human mind for any length of time. And thus it happened, that, after an attempt of fully three-hundred years, to rear an intellectual science on a new foundation, an attempt in which systems and views displaced one another, an utter apathy for all philosophical researches resulted, and men despaired of the right of philosophy to exist, and the younger generation, carried away more or less by the torrent of materialism, instead of applying itself to what was deemed inane speculation, abandoned itself to the realistic powers of life in nature and the world.

And it could hardly have been otherwise. Is it not Titanic pride and self-conceit to declare the intellectual science of thousands of years a falsehood? Is it not insane recklessness to presume to rear a new edifice of philosophy on a new foundation? Has ever any other science, jurisprudence, or physics, or history, attempted such a thing? These sciences have developed, and in their progress have supplemented and corrected faults and deficiencies, but they have never wasted their inherited capital, nor totally rejected and ignored the work of their predecessors.

It must likewise be regarded as a part of the dreadful calamity, brought about by apostasy from the old philosophy, that even Catholics abandoned it to such an extent, as either to suffer that its very remembrance should pass into oblivion, or at most to be acquainted only with its caricature. For this reason the struggle carried on by highly talented Catholic scientists against the erroneous philosophic theories of modern times was unsuccessful; for they also had rejected the old school of philosophy and built up new systems, which, being themselves untenable, were not capable of refuting the enemy; their fundamental premises were as erroneous as those of their opponents, so much so, that the Church, more than once was even compelled to condemn their teachings.

This is the reason why Leo XIII. refers us back to the philosophy of the old Catholic school. "The teachers of the Middle Ages, called scholastics, undertook a great task, when they began carefully to gather the rich and fruitful harvest of knowledge found in the extensive works of the Christian Fathers (Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Athanasius, Basil, both Gregories, and especially Augustine), and collected them for the benefit and use of posterity. Pope Sixtus V.¹ praised the origin, nature and value of scholasticism, when, proclaiming St. Bonaventure a Doctor ecclesiae, he said: "By the grace of Him, Who alone gives the spirit of knowledge, of wisdom and of understanding, and Who lavishes upon His Church new gifts in time of need, as the centuries roll by, our very wise forefathers have reared up scholastic theology. The knowledge and application of this most wholesome science was destined to benefit the Church at all times but in these latter days, when those dangerous times have begun to set in, of which the apostle speaks, and the blasphemers and seducers unto destruction increase in number, themselves full of error and leading others into error, this science is indeed very necessary to confirm Catholic doctrine

¹ Bull, 'Triumphantis Hierusalem' d. 14. Mart. 1588.

and refute heresy." On this Leo XIII. remarks: "These words appear to have reference only to scholastic theology;" but it is apparent, that they are applicable also to philosophy. For the splendid qualities ascribed to it, "the correct and internal connection of the subjects and questions among themselves, the well-ordered divisions, resembling an army in battle-array, the easily intelligible definitions and distinctions, the force of the arguments and of the ingenious developments, by which light is distinguished from darkness, the true from the false, the lies of heretics, who use many tricks and fine phrases, branded and unveiled, all these wonderful qualities have their origin in the right use of that philosophy, which the scholastics employed so diligently and considerably."

You might object to this, that scholastic philosophy did not possess the necessary material to rely upon in order to attain a knowledge of the harmony of the world, since scientific investigation was then so little advanced. This objection is not without plausibility; but it is only plausible. It cannot be upheld even with regard to the natural sciences. John Tyndall¹ says: "Scientific intelligence is like unto a lamp which does

¹ Light.

88 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

not burn and give light until it has been ignited by the taper of experience or trial. But the light which issues from it after it has been ignited, can, by the power peculiar to the intellect, surpass a million times the light of the taper, from which it drew its origin. In fact, it may be said that they stand in an immeasurable relation to each other; some very unimportant and individual facts suffice, by their action on the mind, to generate and develop principles of incalculable application and comprehension." And truly, beginning with Archimedes, the greatest discoveries have had their starting-point from the observation of *very ordinary* and *every-day occurrences*. It was not the multitude of facts which supplied the knowledge, but the genial eye of the master which extracted from the most ordinary facts the most important and far-reaching conclusions. The arguments that are adduced by Aristotle and St. Thomas to prove the existence of God, have not been essentially changed by the discoveries made by the telescope or the microscope. No reasonable man will deny, that these discoveries have added new strength to these arguments; everyone will admit that they have given to philosophy a broader foundation; but at the same time it is also incontestable, that empiricism itself shall never be

able to solve the "seven world-riddles" of Dubois-Reymond.

Hence it is not the Popes alone, who, viewing the utter sterility of philosophical research, point back to the past. It is puerile to speak of a progress in philosophy, simply because we have progressed in time. We *progress* with the times, but we also *recede* with the times. The history of both Greece and Rome evidences this sufficiently. We shall never, as some would wish, retrace our steps to Kant, or Jacobi, or Schleiermacher, or Lotze, or Leibnitz, or Spinoza, or even Buddha, but to that point, where the breach was made between the old and the new philosophy. A man of high scientific authority¹ says: "That prejudice of the Germans must be done away with, which insists on inventing a new formulated principle for the philosophy of the future. The principle has been found. It is expressed in the organic world-view as originated by Plato and Aristotle, and carried out by their successors, which is to be developed by a more thorough investigation of the fundamental notions and of the various departments, and by a mutual coöperation with the real sciences, and thus gradually to be

¹ Ad. Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, (in the introduction).

perfected." This is what may be called speaking reasonably. Or did anybody ever dream, that the elements of Euclid were antiquated, and that mathematics needed a new foundation? No, for then mathematics also could not be called a science. This habit of continual negation, this restless groping after a definite principle, this everlasting beginning anew, this feverish building up of new systems, which are even more rapidly destroyed, whilst all other true sciences receive a treasure of knowledge from antiquity, and develop and pass it on to posterity, this activity, although bespeaking great diligence and application, cannot be called a science. Not incorrectly, therefore did Hegel apply the words of the apostle to the philosophical systems — they apply also to his own — : "Behold the feet of them, who buried thy husband, are at the door, and they shall carry thee out."¹

What are the features of the philosophy that was taught in the old schools? Its fundamental thought is, that there is a field of *objective fundamental truth*, which is calculated to bear the whole weight of human science and of human life! Ancient philosophy was convinced that the questions, which are of the greatest importance for the

¹ Acts, 5, 9.

intellectual and moral life of man — God, virtue, immortality, etc. — can be answered with certainty by rational investigation.¹ From this it is evident, that the doctors of the old school did not positively doubt, or even reject, the scientific treasures, which were handed down to them by their forefathers, in order to build up a new system, as Descartes did, but that they examined the results of the previous centuries, and fortified and developed them with new proofs (examen confirmativum, methodic doubt).

As to its *method*, ancient philosophy went in quest, as every science does, of what is lasting and necessary in the phenomena that came under its observation. It therefore declared war upon sensualism and empiricism, for neither of these can be the foundation of science; it did not seek to obtain its ideas by intellectual intuition — Schelling, Hegel, New Ontology —, much less as the Theosophists, by direct divine influence. It acknowledged not the system of innate ideas — Plato, Descartes —, from which the mind develops all other ideas. Its fundamental principle was rather this: by its nature the human soul has no innate ideas; but it has the power of intelligence, i. e., an active intellectual faculty,

¹ Conc. Vat. 1. c.

and in this faculty it has science in potentia¹; by abstraction from the world of the senses, it acquires science in actu. In this manner, both *idealism* is rejected, which considers the universe a product of the "ego," and also *sensualism*, which acknowledges no universal necessary ideas, and in which consequently science is an impossibility. In this respect scholasticism is with Aristotle, and therefore with him against Plato.² Progressing dialectically, scholasticism only develops new ideas out of known principles (*discurrendo vel concludendo, componendo, et dividendo*).³

My young friend, if you find that I advance the authority of the Popes in recommending to you the study of ancient philosophy, you must not understand me to say, that scholastic philosophy contains pure gold only. It was notably after the period of its greatest splendor, that it amassed a greater or smaller amount of rubbish, particularly when its adherents began to attach too much importance

¹ Thomas, Quaest. disput. De veritate. Quaest. 10, de mente, a. 8, ad 1.: Species aliorum intelligibilium non sunt innatae; sed essentia sua ipsi sibi (mens) innata est.

² Summa I., q. 84, a. 4; De anima. III., lect. 8: Illud, quod est objectum intellectus nostri, non est aliquid extra res sensibiles existens, ut Platonici posuerunt, sed aliquid in rebus sensibilibus existens, licet intellectus apprehendat alio modo quidditates rerum quam sint in rebus sensibilibus.

³ Thomas, Summa, I., q. 58, a. 4.

to Aristotle in questions of physics, although already Albert the Great had adverted, that everything in this line must be established by experiments.¹

Peter of Spain, the author of the *Parva Logicalia*, already marks the beginning of the decline; instead of quarreling about ideas, the schoolmen now quibbled about words, and the commentaries were again commented upon. Influenced by the Wolffian school, scholasticism degenerated to a great extent, and the mathematical method, with its *lemmata* and corollaries etc., which had been introduced, was calculated to substitute manufactured formulas for scientific forms, and thereby to bring into disrepute not only itself, but also the older and better philosophy.

Therefore Leo XIII. says: "If in some things the scholastics were too subtile, and in others less careful in what they taught, if some things do not agree with the accepted

¹ De veget. et plantis, l. VI, c. 1: Earum (sententiarum), quas ponemus, quasdam quidem ipsi nos experimento probamus, quasdam autem referimus ex dictis eorum, quos comperimus non de facili aliqua dicere, nisi probata per experimentum. Experimentum enim solum certificat in talibus, eo quod tam de particularibus naturis simile haberi non potest. (Opera, ed. Jammy V. Lugduni 1651, p. 430.) And H. Ritter (Geschichte der christl. Philos. III., Hamburg 1844, p. 153 sq.) says, that the scholastics were not in servile dependence on the Aristotelico-Arabian doctrine, and that they, who accuse the scholastics of this, know nothing of either schools,

teachings of later periods, or are proved to be untenable, we do not wish them to be followed in these particulars;" and he further observes: "that we ought gladly and gratefully to receive whatever has been wisely said, or usefully thought, or discovered." He also shields scholasticism against the objection, that it is opposed to the progress of the natural sciences, and he refers especially to St. Thomas and Albert the Great.

And truly, every real progress made by man in the natural sciences has but added new proofs to the arguments of orthodox philosophy and confirmed its theses. The great efforts made, to add new proofs to Darwinism, and, in the interest of monistic theories, to explain all phenomena in the universe by the laws of mechanics, have simply confirmed anew the postulate, that a supernatural power exists. The great divisions in modern philosophy, idealism and scepticism on the one hand, and crude empiricism, positivism and materialism on the other, tend to prove, how philosophy, by deserting its ancient principles, has become lost in a labyrinth, out of which there is no salvation, as long as it will persist in walking in its new and untrodden path.

Try then, my young friend, to enter into the spirit of the ancient philosophy, by seek-

ing some competent teacher to introduce and acquaint you with the study of one or the other of the great masters. But never suffer yourself to believe, that you have mastered scholasticism or philosophy, by simply hearing a course of lectures on the *history* of *philosophy*.

It is downright folly, to believe, that one can cover the very large territory of the history of philosophy in one short term of six months, as is really attempted nowadays in so many schools; this results in the maltreatment and intellectual torture of our young men, and in a degradation of philosophy itself. How much time and intellectual application does it not take to master fully but one system, say Aristotle's of ancient, St. Thomas' of medieval, or Schelling's of modern times. And yet this is what should be accomplished; a simple accumulation of meagre notes will not suffice. Of late the idea has become prevalent, that the study of the history of philosophy is the only truly educating one, because by it the young man, being raised beyond all the systems, "is enabled to see the progressive evolution of philosophy, which is grounded in the desire of the human intellect to unify and identify existence and knowledge, and more and more to penetrate into the very lowest depths of the universe. Progress is

common to it, as it is to the other sciences, but its progress is different from that of the positive sciences. With the latter, progress means *accession*, e. g., in mathematics; what is already gained is not overthrown, but simply accedes. Every new philosophical system begins anew; it has a different origin, lays a new foundation, destroys all former systems.”¹ How then will a young man, wandering over this vast grave-yard of long-entombed philosophical systems, gain a knowledge of genuine philosophy? Will light evolve out of this chaos to his understanding? can he combine these thousand discordant voices into a higher unity? is it possible that these “Sisyphuses of human thought” can be an attractive picture to him, and encourage him, urge him on to undertake a task equally arduous and fruitless?

. Sisyphus versat
Saxum sudans nitendo neque proficit hilum.²

In the old schools they appreciated the educational influence of the history of philosophy; but there it was taught only toward the end of the two or three year’s course of philosophy. And correctly so. A. Rixner,³

¹ A. Schwegler, *Geschichte der griech. Philosophie*, Tübingen 1859, p. 2 sq.

² Cicero, *Tuscul. disp.* I., 5.

³ *Handbuch der Geschichte der Philos.*, 2nd ed., I., (Sulzbach 1829) p. 3.

who is not in the least an admirer of scholasticism, says: "The form of the history of philosophy is the higher unity of rational intuition, which must *precede* the history of philosophy, in order that one may fully understand all the various philosophical systems in their relation to the total organism of rational ideas about the universe." It is only then, that this branch of study can produce knowledge, and not confusion. The student is now able to comprehend the different systems in their origin, their methods and results; he has acquired a norm, by which he can measure their worth. Before obtaining an exact definition of the term, substance, he will be unable to recognize the paralogisms in Spinoza; without first understanding the meaning of "synthetic judgment," he will not understand the origin of Kant's criticism; without a clear comprehension of the term, idea, he will not understand the difference between Plato and Aristotle, nor the controversies of the Nominalists and Realists, nor the errors of empiricism and sensualism, nor the office of science in general.

Lastly, how could a young man understand the modern philosophical systems, each of which has its own peculiar terminology? How can he pass any judgment at all, if he

has not been made acquainted with the philosophical terminology so ingeniously established by Aristotle and further developed by the scholastics?

However, by laying stress on the philosophy of the old school, I do not mean to say, as I have insinuated before, that we are to rehabilitate it *in toto*, as so many archaists have done in art, who have gone so far as to imitate the very faults of the old masters. It is to the principles, which it had itself received from antiquity, tested and purified in the fire of divine and Christian truth, that we must return. Every period has its own wants, its own predilections, and consequently its own exigencies. Thus, my dear Timothy, let us build upon the old, but not despise the good, which our own times have furnished.

In conclusion, since I have spoken of the good qualities of the old school in opposition to the desolate aspect of the schools of the present day, I will not fail to mention one feature, by means of which it exerted a most beneficial influence on true intellectual culture. It was by the exercise of *disputations*. Why?

Knowledge is acquired, says St. Thomas, *componendo et dividendo*; in the concept we collect the common characteristics of the idea,

and again distinguish whatever is peculiar to each representation. Without distinguishing our ideas become confused, and we cannot attain knowledge; without gathering the essential points into a higher unity, there is no science, for science has for its object that which is universal and essential in various things. To distinguish whatever is distinguishable in a concept, is the fundamental condition of scientific elucidation. For, why are there so many errors, if not on account of terms that are vague, ambiguous, too general, of notions devoid of clearness and accuracy, of ideas dissimilar and only accidentally and externally related to each other, of thoughts foreign to each other and associated together unnaturally and illogically? Now, this is precisely what we accomplish by disputations; they urge us, first of all, to examine every concept, as the mason would examine every stone to be used in a building. If this is not done, the written, and still more so the oral discourse is liable to mislead the reader or hearer by its fine periods, its flowery language, the novelty of its ideas, but it will have no scientific merit. For, only qui bene distinguit, bene docet.

The disputations do this. It is easier indeed to read to the pupils a previously

prepared paper or an academical discourse; but whether this one-sided method, in which the pupils have nothing else to do than to listen to the professor, can prove profitable, is certainly a point worthy of serious consideration.

In the disputations, on the contrary, the student, under the care of the teacher, learns how to define his ideas clearly, to detect at once the faulty argumentation of his adversary, to develop his thoughts according to the laws of dialectics, and to lay down his arguments in strictly logical form; as also to establish clearly the point at issue, and thus to penetrate into the very marrow of the subject; and, as he is obliged to answer every opponent, he must have a perfect command of his subject. It is not a slight advantage, that he learns to repeat correctly, and fully, without change or addition, the objection of his adversary, by which alone an understanding is brought about; and just because this is so seldom done, we rarely hear of an agreement being arrived at in scientific quarrels; the misunderstanding is rather heightened, and, in oral disputations, the enmity increased.



LETTER VI.

The Philosophy of St. Thomas Aquinas.

In the encyclical of Leo XIII., which I have repeatedly quoted, he laments the fact, that “a new method of philosophizing has taken the place of the old school, but, without the hoped-for and salutary fruits. As a proximate result we notice a morbid multiplication of philosophical systems, having different and also contradictory views concerning even those questions, which are of the highest importance to the human mind. This multiplicity of views has frequently led to uncertainty and doubt; and how easy it is for the human mind to fall from doubt into error, everybody readily understands.” — — Contrasting the aberrations of modern times with the philosophy of the old schools, the Pope, with a certain emphasis, calls our attention to St. Thomas Aquinas. He says: “St. Thomas has united the teachings of scholasticism, as the members of one body are united, and has arranged them in wonderful order, and to a great extent so perfected them, that he is justly regarded both as an

ornament and a stronghold of the Church. . . . There is no branch of philosophy, which he has not treated with great ingenuity and remarkable success; his researches on the laws of thinking, on God, and the spiritual substances, on man and the other visible objects, on the human acts and their principles, are such, as to contain an unusual abundance of knowledge, fitting adjustment of the various parts, conformity of methods, certainty of principles and force of arguments, clearness and exactness of expression, as also such perspicuity and ease of style, as to illumine even the most obscure matter."

"To this it should be added, that the Angelic Doctor deduced from the ideas and first principles of things, the philosophical conclusions which were of the greatest import for all future times, being destined to become the seeds and germs, as it were, of numberless truths, which were to be developed, in a most prolific manner, in future times, by the teachers of every age. And since he applied his method of philosophizing also to refute errors, he has been capable of confuting all the errors of the preceding ages, and to supply the unfailing weapons by which all future errors can be disproved. And, moreover, since he distinguished accurately between reason and faith, uniting both, however, in

one bond of friendship, he has not only preserved intact the rights of each, but has also taken care of the dignity of each, so much so, that reason carried aloft on the wings of St. Thomas to its greatest perfection, can ascend no higher, and faith cannot ask of reason any more or better proofs, than those already given by St. Thomas."

Singular phenomenon ! After centuries of oblivion and contempt that have passed over St. Thomas, an eminent professor of law has recently confessed: "I cannot deny the charge that I am ignorant of the teachings of St. Thomas, but the weight of such a reproach must fall heavier still on modern philosophers and Protestant theologians, who have neglected to make use of the grand thoughts of this man. I ask myself in astonishment: How can it be possible, that such truths, having once been enunciated, could be consigned to oblivion by our Protestant scientists? What monstrous aberrations would have been spared them, had they taken them to heart! Perhaps this book would not have been written, had I known them, for the fundamental ideas in which I was interested, are found expressed with perfect clearness, and in a very pregnant form, in the books of that powerful thinker." ¹

¹ R. v. Ihering, *Der Zweck im Recht*. I. 2nd edit. Leipzig, 1884. Introd.

In another book,¹ I have indicated, in a few lines, the position of St. Thomas in the history of Europe, in the Church and in science. His appearance on the scene might be called providential, in a manner similar to the mission of Origen against Celsus, of St. Athanasius against the Arians, of St. Augustine against the Manicheans, Donatists and Pelagians, of St. Bernard against Abelard; only we may consider the appearance of St. Thomas providential in a still higher sense. As Pharus he looms up in a dark period and sends the light of his genius through subsequent ages. It was not granted to him to live and teach as long as his tutor and companion in the order, Albert the Great; but, in the comparatively few years of his career as a teacher, he has sown a seed, by the fruits of which the generations after him are being nourished. And the farther we are removed from him by the lapse of centuries, and the longer the perspective through which we view him, the more imposing he stands before us. Let us examine the outlines of his system.

The best specimen of his system is represented by his '*Summa*'; it is the grandest fruit of his genius, but it remained unfinished; he reached only the fourth article of

¹ Thomas von Aquin und die europaeische Civilisation, Frankfurt, 1880.

the ninetieth question of the third part; he was removed by death on his way to the council of Lyons, to which Gregory X. had called him. Many of his contemporaries accused Charles of Anjou of having poisoned him, because he was afraid, that Thomas would impeach him at the council.¹ As the greatest monument of his time, the Cologne Cathedral, remained unfinished, to be completed only in modern times, so likewise a similar fate awaited that grand intellectual fabric of the '*Summa*'. It was reserved for our own days to continue the work after the "measure and compass" that had fallen in death from the master's hands, and to insert the keystone to his temple.

Above all, St. Thomas lays stress on the law of science. He says with Aristotle: "All men have an innate thirst for knowledge."² In what does the essence of true science consist? To this we receive the answer: "Truth is the adequation of the intellect to the object."³ Science must therefore represent the actual, real world in an intellectual, ideal manner, so that the soul may become in a

¹ Some older commentators of Dante's '*Divine Comedy*' (Purgatory XX., 67.), Benvenuto of Imola, Ottimo, Francesco da Buti, Pietro di Dante, accuse Charles of this.

² Metaph I., 1.

³ *Summa* I. 7. 16, a. 1: Veritas est adaequatio rei et intellectus. Cf. Arist. Metaph. VI., 4,

certain sense the "mirror of the universe."¹ How does a man acquire the knowledge of the exterior world, of science principally?

Five centuries after St. Thomas, Kant put the same question to himself: "How can we have synthetic judgments a priori about the objects of our experience?" i. e., how is it possible for selfconsciousness, for the ego, to become conscious of objects outside of itself? My young friend, you know the answer he gave to this question. The objects themselves we do not perceive, but we perceive them in the manner in which they are represented by our innate subjective forms, or categories. Thus subjective idealism was established, every science was inclosed in the circle of subjective appearances. This was the fatal step taken by him and by all modern philosophy.

St. Thomas, too, starts out from experience, but he does not stop there. The task allotted to science is, to acquire knowledge of the natures or essences of things, and this can be done only by the intellect.² True, our cognition *begins* with the senses, but the senses themselves are not alone, nor principally, the cause of our cognition; the first and principal cause is the intellect.³

¹ Arist., *De anima* III., 8.

² *Summa* I., q. 78, a. 3: *Naturas sensibilibus qualitatum cognoscere non est sensus, sed intellectus.*

³ *Omnis cognitio incipit a sensibus, axiom of the schools.* *Summa* I., q. 84, a. 6: *Non potest dici quod sen-*

Thus far St. Thomas and the old school agree with Kant. Both admit that our cognition begins from the senses, but both also acknowledge that the essence of science, the universal, namely, and the necessary, does not consist in the sensible phenomenon. But here begins the divergence; our knowledge, according to Kant, is effected by the *a priori* forms of our intellect; according to St. Thomas, however, by the object itself, and, consequently, we do not only establish a certain, subjective order of the phenomena, but we also comprehend the essence of the things by the power of our intellect, and thereby comprehend them in a higher way, than we do by the senses. For as St. Thomas starts from experience, he acquires an objective foundation for knowledge, by reason of the sensible apprehension, by which the sensible object is represented immaterially.¹ The sensible object is accidental, individual; but science cannot base its foundation on sensible

sitiva cognitio sit totalis et perfecta causa intellectualis cognitionis, sed magis quodammodo est materia causae. Summa, l. c. q. 85, a. 1: Intellectus noster intelligit materialia abstrahendo a phantasmatibus, et per materialia sic considerata in immaterialium aliqualem cognitionem devenimus.

¹ Quaest. disp., De verit. q. 8, a. 11, ad 3: Forma lapidis in anima est longe alterius naturae quam forma lapidis in materia; sed in quantum repraesentat eam, sic est principium ducens in cognitionem ejus.

cognition, and therefore St. Thomas requires a higher power of cognition; this is the *intellect*, which apprehends the universal and the necessary, the essences of things;¹ but the intellect is not an organic but a spiritual faculty, a faculty of the soul;² this is proved by the difference that exists between its functions and those of the senses. Since the intellect is joined to the body by a union of life, it follows, that the object of its cognition must be the intelligible, the universal, the necessary which exists in sensible, corporeal, individual objects, not indeed in the manner in which it exists therein, but in an incorporeal manner.³ The essence of the things which we apprehend in the universal notion is present in these things, but endowed with accidental determinations; to disengage the essence from these accidental determinations is the work of abstraction. Thus we determine the idea of man by abstraction from individual man, the idea of

¹ Summa, I., q. 57 a. 1, ad 2: Intellectus solus apprehendit essentias rerum.

² Contra gent. II, 66: Contra ponentes intellectum et sensum esse idem.

³ Summa, I., q. 85, a. 1: Intellectus humanus medio modo se habet (inter sensum et intellectum angelicum); non enim est actus alicujus organi, sed tamen est quaedam virtus animae, quae est formâ corporis. . . . Et ideo proprium ejus est cognoscere formam in materia quidem corporali individualiter existentem, non tamen prout est in tali materia,

being by abstraction from individual existing objects. Thus the sensible apprehensions act upon the imagination; the phantasmata thus acquired excite the intellect to exercise its proper functions; ¹ thus man apprehends the essence of things by his innate intellectual faculties, influenced and nourished by the outer world. Thus sensible apprehension is the beginning, whilst the formation of the idea in the mind is the end of the intellectual process. Abstraction (*natura*) precedes cognition, for only by abstracting do we know; therefore analysis, the abstraction of the essence from the individuating conditions, is the first act of the mind, not synthesis, which is the uniting of an *a priori* judgment with an object of experience, as was held by Kant. ²

Dante says with Thomas:

¹ De anima, III., lect. 12: Phantasmata se habent ad intellectivam partem animae, sicut sensibilia ad sensum. Unde sicut sensus movetur a sensibilibus, ita intellectus a phantasmatibus.

² This process in our cognition is described by St. Augustine (*De Trinitate* XI., 9.): Cum incipimus a specie corporis et pervenimus usque ad speciem, quae fit in contuitu cogitantis, quatuor species reperiuntur quasi gradatim natae altera ex altera, secunda de prima, tertia de secunda, quarta de tertia. A specie quippe corporis, quod cernitur, exoritur ea, quae fit in sensu cernentis; et ab hac ea, quae fit in memoria (imagination), et ab hac ea, quae fit in acie cogitantis.

ideas of the ego, of God and the world, its distinction between noumenon, the thing in itself, and phenomenon, its appearance.

Soon after the publishing of Kant's book, Goethe said truly: "With some attention I could notice, that the old fundamental question was again being agitated: how much does our own self, and how much does the exterior world contribute to our intellectual existence ? ¹

Modern philosophy having completely gone astray, and the philosophy of identity of Schelling, as also the pantheism of thought of Hegel being already long forgotten, our generation, not wishing to fall a prey to hopeless materialism or pantheism, looks about for a saving hand, and it is in Kant that it expects to find help in its need, although it is from Kant himself that all these errors have sprung, either indirectly or directly. By looking over the course of German philosophy during the last century, we shall find, that all these one-sided opinions mentioned above, have had their origin in Kant; a reconciliation with Kant would necessarily bring about the same errors, and this the more quickly.

The *species intelligibilis*, says St. Thomas, is *not* the *principium quod*, but the *principium*

¹ Zur Naturgeschichte ueberhaupt, besonders zur Morphologie I., 2. p. 104.

quo of our sensible apprehension, by which we receive the sensible objects, not materially as they are outside of ourselves, but immaterially.¹

By sensible apprehension, we first apprehend the individual object immaterially; by the intellect, which acquires the idea by abstraction from the individual object, we learn to know this object, and by this the essence of the object. Thus the idea (*species intelligibilis*) is primarily in the intellect, our cognition first of all is a subjective process and immanent in the intellect; but through the idea the intellect apprehends the essence of things, of which the idea is a representation.² The image in the mirror is not the external object itself, but its likeness reproduced by the mirror.³ Thus our intellect becomes, so to speak, a second all, since it reproduces everything intellectually.⁴ St. Thomas says:⁵

¹ Quaest. disp., De verit., q. 2, a. 6: Oportet, ut quaelibet cognitio sit per modum formae, quae est in cognoscente. Summa, I., q. 14, a. 6, ad 1: Sic solum cognosceus cognoscit cognitum, secundum quod cognitum est in cognoscente. Cf. note on page 107. St. Thomas often repeats this same principle.

² St. Augustine, in Ps. 139, 15: Quod dicimur eos in corde habere, de quibus cogitamus, secundum quandam imaginem dicimur, quam de illis habemus impressam.

³ Opusc. 41: Est tamquam speculum, in quo res cernitur.

⁴ Anima quodammodo omnia. Cf. Arist., De anima III., 8.

⁵ Summa, I., q. 85, a. 2.

What some have said is manifestly false, — that our cognitive powers do not apprehend anything but our subjective impressions; and this for two reasons. First, that which we apprehend and the object of science are identical. If therefore the *perceptions of our intellect only* were the subject-matter of science, then there would be no science of external objects, but only of the ideas which are within us. (Kant.) Furthermore, from this it would follow, that everything is true that appears true to us, and that consequently also the contraries would be true (Hegel); for then our intellect would judge of its own perceptions only, if it apprehended these only. The intellect perceives, as it is acted upon. Consequently the intellect will always judge according to what affects it, and therefore every judgment will be true. Therefore we should say, that the idea is to the intellect as the *means by which* it apprehends. “It is true, the intellect can meditate on the idea itself, and then it reflects on its own activity; but this is only a secondary object of knowledge; the essence of things is what the intellect primarily perceives.”¹

Thus our ideas have not only a subjective but also an objective value; the laws of logic

¹ Summa, I., q. 85, a. 2: Species intellecta secundario est id, quod intelligitur; sed id, quod intelligitur primo, est res, cujus species intelligibilis est similitudo.

and the categories of ontology are the real determinations of the things themselves. Thus the real corresponds to the ideal order, metaphysic to logic, thus science is made possible, thus we know the world. But what is the world itself? It is not absolute; if it were so, it would necessarily suffice for itself; but this is not the case. All things in this world strive to perfect themselves, all things aspire to a higher good, the free and the conscious in a free and conscious manner, the unconscious and those without freedom, in an unconscious and necessary way.¹ For this very reason the things of this world are not good in themselves, they become good by participation in that, and by acquisition of that, which is good in itself — that is, the highest Good. *And this is God.* Thus does the world prove the existence of God. “Everything loves Him, and to love Him above all is natural for every creature, not only for the rational, but also for the irrational, nay, also for the inanimate, according to the mode of love, which can be inherent in every creature.”² And the created intellect, by possessing the highest earthly good, — the power of understanding, wishes for and desires an infinite intelligence, which

¹ 1. c. I., q. 6, a. 1, ad 2.

² Summa, I., 2. q. 109, a. 3.

is above itself, from which all intelligible light proceeds, *as physical light proceeds from the sun.¹ Based on the knowledge of the world and of ourselves, we ascend to the knowledge of God; for the human intellect, that bears within itself the ideas of good and truth, that thinks, and thinking apprehends itself and freely determines itself, that, freed from matter, elevates itself into the realm of the intelligible, is for this very reason an image of God, of the Absolute Intellect.² The rest of creation also bears vestiges of God, Whose hand has created it.³ The heathen already sought God.⁴ St. Thomas shows us the ways that lead to Him. *Motion* points to a first motor, *effects* to a first cause, that which is *accidental* and *conditional*

¹ Quaest. disp., De spiritual. creaturis, a. 10. Summa I., q. 16, a. 6. ad 1: Veritas prima est major anima.—I. II., q. 109, a. 1, ad 2: Sol corporalis illustrat exterius; sed sol intelligibilis, qui est Deus, illustrat interius. Unde ipsum lumen naturale animae inditum est illustratio Dei, qua illustramur ab ipso ad cognoscendum ea, quae pertinent ad naturalem cognitionem.

² I., q. 45, a. 7: In creaturis rationalibus, in quibus est intellectus et voluntas, invenitur repraesentatio Trinitatis per modum imaginis, in quantum invenitur in eis verbum conceptum et amor procedens.

³ I. c.: In creaturis omnibus invenitur repraesentatio Trinitatis per modum vestigii, in quantum in qualibet creatura inveniuntur aliqua, quae necesse est reducere in divinas personas sicut in causam.

⁴ Acts, 17, 27.

in the world, to that which is necessary and unconditional, the *imperfect* things to a supreme and most perfect good, the *order* and *harmony* of the world to Him, Who is the principle of this order.¹

Who is God? The finite intellect, essentially united with the body, cannot in this world perceive the essence of God, as it is in itself; for only that which is sensibly perceptible and gained by abstraction, directly corresponds to its knowledge.² True, God, because He is Truth itself, is in the highest manner cognoscible; but to view Him as He is, surpasses the natural powers of cognition even of the highest intelligence; the infinite alone is capable to comprehend the infinite. Therefore "as the eyes of the night-owl are disposed toward the light of day, so is the reason of our soul toward that, which is by nature the brightest light of all."³ Nevertheless our intellect is capable of knowing God, but only *discursively*, rising from the finite to the infinite, and therefore not directly, but only by *analogy* and imperfectly.⁴

In a threefold way we can arrive at the knowledge of the divine Being. First by

¹ I., q. 2, a. 3: Deum esse, quinque viis probari potest.

² Compare note 3, 108.

³ Arist., *Metaph.*, II., 1; cf. Thomas, *Summa* I., q. 12, a. 1, 4, 11.

⁴ *Summa* I., q. 13 per totum.

the way of *causality* (per viam causalitatis); for the creature is changeable and defective, and therefore leads us to a supreme cause, which has called it into existence, and which must consequently be unchangeable and perfect. Then again, by the way of *eminence* (per viam eminentiæ); for since the supreme cause has caused everything that exists, it must contain in itself all created things in an infinitely perfect manner. And lastly, we know God by the way of *negation* (per viam negationis); since He transcends all created things infinitely, nothing which pertains to the creature as such, as for instance, finiteness, can be predicated of Him.¹ Thus, by pondering over creation, we apprehend the unity and simplicity, the infinity and absolute goodness of the divine essence.²

Starting from this point, the Angelic Doctor combats and overcomes *materialism*, as well as *pantheism* in its various forms. The materialist makes a God of matter, thinks God corporeal; but, a body cannot be God, for a body does not move, unless it be first moved. But God is the prime Mover.³ Moreover, it is possible for a body to experience different

¹ Summa, I., q. 13 per totum. — Exposit. in epist. ad Roman., c. 1. lectio 6.

² 1, q. 3-12.

³ 1, q. 3, a. 1.

changes; but that which is the beginning of things, the prime-cause of all actual things, is not a mere possibility, but something actual; for from the merely possible nothing actual proceeds. Furthermore: Were God a body, He would have to be a living body, for that is nobler than the dead, and God is the noblest of beings. The living body is such only by the soul; and the soul is nobler than the body — therefore God is not a body.¹ Again, the body is changeable, God is not; the body is necessarily limitable, God is necessarily illimitable — therefore God is not a body.² Lastly, the body is composite; but that which is composite is made such and perfected by a unifying principle. God does not receive any perfection from without — therefore God is not a body.

Pantheism, the outcome of Cartesianism, arose again with Baruch Spinoza. It first saw the light of day in the ancient Indian religious systems (Brahma.) Pantheism places unity, the last principle of things, in the things themselves, which are therefore related to it (the last principle) not as the effects are to the cause (dependence), but as the appearances are to the essence, the accidents to the substance. Differences exist only in

¹ 1. c.

² Contra gent., I., 20; Summa I., q. 9, a. 1.

the appearance, not in the substance itself; the universe is God, God is the universe, all things in the world are only the forms, attributes, revelations of the one infinite (immanence).¹ Hartmann in his "Philosophy of the Unknown" will explain this to you.² "I am an appearance, as the rainbow is in the clouds; like it, I also am born out of a combination of circumstances, every second I become something different, because the circumstances change, and I shall cease, whenever this combination will cease; what there is of being in me, is not myself. The sun alone, which plays in this cloud, shines eternally; the Unknown alone, which is refracted in my brain, reigns eternally." You and I, beast and man, body and spirit, God and the world are strictly identical in being. For this reason the Mahometan pantheist invokes God thus:

Hail, thou Spirit, freed alike from "You
and me,"

Who nor male nor female art, all hail,
ery we!

Male and female merged in one, thou
primal essence,

Multitude reduced to oneness forms thy
presence.³

¹ "Deus est causa rerum immanens," says Spinoza.

² Berlin 1869, p. 462.

³ Dschelaleddin Rumi, in Tholuck's, *Blüthensammlung* aus der morgenländischen Mystik, Berlin, 1825, p. 187 ff.

The original form of pantheism is *Hylozoism*; God is the soul of the world. With the Eleatics (Parmenides, Zeno) it developed into pure Akosmism; Spinoza sought to establish it mathematically; Schleiermacher, Schelling, Hegel, took up his views, although in a greatly modified form.¹

Now advert to the arguments with which St. Thomas confutes pantheism. God, he says, has His existence from and by Himself; for if He received it from another, then not He, but this other would be God. Therefore we find that in Him idea coincides with actuality, and essence with existence (*essentia et existentia*); He is the subsisting Being itself.² Were there in Him a difference between essence and existence, He would have in His essence the cause of what He is; but God cannot have a cause in another. For this very reason He possesses all perfections possible without the admixture of any imperfection.³ He is pure act (*actus purus*) without any potentiality (*potentia*), which must first be brought into actuality by something actual; He is a pure, most perfect spirit.⁴ Therefore He is separate from all that is corporeal, imperfect, finite and change-

¹ Cf. Con. Vat., de fide cath. c. 1, can. 3-5.

² Summa, I., q. 3, a. 2-4.

³ S. I., q. 4. a. 2.

⁴ S. I., q. 3, a. 7 sq.

able. And so God, the Perfect, stands at the beginning of the evolution of things, and not chaos, the imperfect, matter, the indifference of nature and spirit.¹

But, answers Spinoza: *Determinatio negatio est.* And following him, Fichte, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Strauss say: If you wish to determine God as a distinct being, distinct from the infinite universe, have you not thereby minimized Him, and made Him finite and limited, and thereby done away with the idea of the infinite altogether?²

Thus the thought of a personal God, distinct from the universe, implies a contradiction; the infinite is supposed to be infinite and at the same time finite and limited. Fichte says: "This Being, you say, is distinct from

¹ Summa, I., q. 4, a. 1, ad 2: Oportet ante id, quod est in potentia, esse aliquid in actu, cum ens in potentia non reducatur in actum nisi per aliquod ens in actu. Ad. 3: Ipsum esse est actualitas omnium rerum et etiam ipsarum formarum. Art. 2: Cum Deus sit ipsum esse subsistens, nihil de perfectione essendi potest ei deesse. Omnium autem perfectiones pertinent ad perfectionem essendi. Secundum hoc enim aliqua perfecta sunt, quod aliquo modo esse habent.

² Spinoza, Ep. 50, (Opera, ed. C. H. Bruder 2, Lipsiae 1844, p. 299); Fichte, Philos. Journal VIII. (1798); Hegel, Encyclopaedie der philos. Wissenschaften, Heidelberg, 1830, p. 107 ff.; Schleiermacher, Reden über die Religion, Kritische Ausgabe von B. Puenjer, Braunschweig 1879, p. 167, ff.; Strauss, Die christliche Glaubenslehre I. (Tübingen and Stuttgart 1840) p. 502 ff.

you and the world, has personality and consciousness. What then do you mean by personality and consciousness? Surely that, which you have found in yourselves, which you have learned of yourselves and designate by this name. The least attention to your construction of the thought will teach you, that you do not and cannot conceive this without limit and finiteness. Consequently by attributing this predicate to God, you have made Him finite, a being like unto yourselves, and you have not, as you desired to do, acquired the idea of God, but only multiplied yourselves by thinking.”¹ Absolute personality is, according to these men, a complete contradiction, of which no conception can be formed.

My young friend, I have not found a satisfactory answer to this objection in the writings of those representatives of modern philosophy who are combating pantheism. *St. Thomas was acquainted long ago with this objection, and also gave a lucid explanation and solution thereof.* He distinguishes *universal* being and *Divine Being*; the former is but the product of our last abstraction from the individual, without any determination of the contents, excepting the negation of non-being, which therefore exists only in the idea, and is applicable to

¹ Fichte, 1. c. p. 16

every being that exists; ¹ the divine Being on the contrary, is not an ideal being, existing *only* in the *intellect*, but the most real being, and not by any means the mere personification of the universal, abstract, undetermined being of pantheism. Therefore, St. Thomas makes a distinction between the pure being of pantheism, and the pure being of theistic theology. The former is abstract, undetermined being, the latter is the most highly determined, namely, by the infinite perfection of its own essence; ² *He is the Being.*

¹ De ente et essentia, c. 6: Nec oportet, si dicimus, Deus est esse tantum, ut in errorem incidamus eorum, qui Deum dixerant esse illud esse universale, quo quaelibet res formaliter est. Contra gent., I., 26: Multo minus et ipsum esse commune est aliquid praeter omnes res existentes, nisi in intellectu solo. Si igitur Deus sit commune esse, Deus non erit aliqua res existens, nisi quae sit in intellectu tantum. Ostensum autem est supra (c. 13.) Deum esse aliquid non solum in intellectu, sed in natura rerum. Non est igitur Deus ipsum esse commune omnium.

² Summa, I., q. 3. a. 4., St. Thomas thus states the objection of pantheism, taken from the idea of pure being: Esse, cui nulla fit additio, est esse commune, quod de omnibus praedicatur. Sequitur ergo, quod Deus sit ens commune, praedicabile de omnibus. And he answers: Aliquid, cui nulla fit additio, potest intelligi dupliciter. Uno modo, ut de ratione ejus sit, quod non fiat ei additio, sicut de ratione animalis irrationalis est, ut sit sine ratione. Alio modo intelligitur aliquid, cui non fit additio, quia non est de ratione ejus, quod sibi fiat additio: sicut animal commune est sine ratione, quia non est de ratione animalis communis, ut habeat rationem; sed nec de ratione ejus est, ut careat ratione. Primo igitur modo esse sine additione est esse divinum; secundo modo esse sine additione est esse commune (ad. 1.).

124 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Because God is the plenitude of being and the cause of all finite being, He transcends all finite, limited being, and is therefore distinct from it.¹ He cannot then be more accurately determined, because He actually is, what He can be, whilst all other things are composed of something possible and something actual, potentiality and act. Therefore we call God an absolute, personal being, that is, the most simple being, existing in and for itself, whose life we represent to ourselves as *similar* to our intellectual life, without applying to God and the creature univocally our ideal properties derived from the finite. They can be applied to God only analogically.²

Indeed, St. Thomas does not emphasize the expression "personal God" as we do, for we have been obliged to do so on account of the teachings of the pantheists; but he emphasizes that, which belongs to the notion of personality, viz. *subsistere, ratiocinari et individuum esse*.³

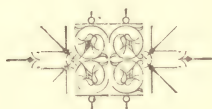
¹ Opuscul., 26, De ente et essentia, c. 6; Contra gent., I., 26; In 1, Sent., dist. 43, q. 1, a. 1; De spirit. creat., a. 1.

² Summa I., q. 13, a. 5; *Omnis effectus non adaequans virtutem causae agentis recipit similitudinem agentis, non secundum eandem rationem, sed deficienter. Unde nullum nomen univoce de Deo et creaturis praedicatur. Dicendum est igitur, quod huiusmodi nomina dicuntur de Deo et creaturis secundum analogiam, id est, proportionem.*

³ Summa I., q. 29, a. 3.

Let us rehearse his argumentation: God is not a body, God is not composed of corporeal or finite things, nor of substance and accident,¹ and therefore He is most simple,² because wholly immaterial, therefore the most perfect spirit, the highest intelligence,³ the highest will,⁴ and is individualized by the perfection of His own essence.⁵

My young friend, I philosophised more in this letter, than I had at first intended; but the reputation of the 'great master' was at stake, for, of late, some have charged him with sensualism and empiricism in his doctrine on cognition, and with pantheism in his theology. And these men are not of the meaner class.



¹ Summa I., q. 3, a. 1-6.

² I. c. a. 7.

³ S. I., q. 14, per totum.

⁴ S. I., q. 19, per totum.

⁵ Contra gent., I., 26.

LETTER VII.

**The Philosophy of St. Thomas
Aquinas.**

(Conclusion.)

Two truths, of great importance in the field of philosophy, you have learnt, my young friend, from St. Thomas, namely: How does man acquire science? How does man acquire the knowledge of the one, personal God? With these we have built a solid foundation on which to base our world-view; now we can proceed further.

Ascending to God by analysis, we descend to the creature by synthesis. Now the question arises: *What is the world?*

The poet, receiving from St. Thomas his noblest inspirations, has answered the question :

That which dies not,
And that which can die, are but each
the beam

Of that idea, which our Sovereign Sire
Engendereth loving; for that lively
light,

Which passeth from his brightness, not
disjoin'd

Beyond time's limit or what bound
soe'er

To circumscribe His being, as He will'd,
Into new natures, like unto Himself,
Eternal Love unfolded. Nor before
As if in dull inaction torpid lay.

For not in process of before or aft
Upon these waters mov'd the Spirit of
God.¹

Since God is the supreme Good, He cannot receive from another an increase of good; therefore nothing could necessitate Him to create the world; His goodness alone, since He wished to communicate His goods to finite things, was the motive cause, prompting Him to create them.² As images of God in a finite way, they therefore necessarily reveal His splendor.

His glory, by whose might all things
are mov'd.

Pierces the universe, and in one part
Sheds more resplendence, elsewhere
less.³

Therefore the world has not come forth from God *necessarily*; and therefore it is not necessarily *such as it is*; therefore it is not necessary from eternity. God, indeed is

¹ Parad. XXIX., 13 ff.

² Contra gent., I., 81; II., 21-27. Summa I., q. 19, a. 3.

³ Parad. I., 1, sq.

eternal, says St. Thomas against Averroes — and this applies also to all representatives of pantheism, — but although He had eternally the will to create the world, He did not therefore create an eternal world.¹ A particular causality presupposes matter and acts in time; but God is the supreme, the universal cause of all being, and therefore creates the form with the matter, and time with temporal things.² In vain do they object to this the axiom of the ancient philosophers: “*Ex nihilo nihil fit.*” St. Thomas has shown where the objection is faulty. If we speak of the *individual* effects in their relation to the *individual* causes, then this objection holds good; but if

¹ Summa I., q. 46, a. 1, ad 10: In agentibus per voluntatem, quod conceptum est et praedefinitum, accipitur ut forma quae est principium actionis. Ex actione igitur aeterna Dei non sequitur effectus aeternus, sed qualem Deus voluit, ut scilicet haberet esse post non esse.

² 1. c. ad 6: Primum agens est agens voluntarium. Et quamvis habuerit voluntatem aeternam producendi aliquem effectum, non tamen produxit aeternum effectum. Non est necesse quod praesupponatur aliqua mutatio, nec etiam propter imaginationem temporis. Aliter enim intelligendum est de agente particulari, quod praesupponit aliquid et causat alterum, et aliter de agente universali, quod producit totum. In agente universali, quod producit rem et tempus, non est considerare, quod agat nunc et non prius secundum imaginationem temporis post tempus, quasi tempus praesupponatur ejus actioni. Sed considerandum est, quod dedit effectui suo tempus, quantum et quando voluit, et secundum quod conveniens fuit ad suam potentiam demonstrandam.

the question arises as to the origin of all things, we must consider the highest and universal, not the proximate and individual causality.¹ The highest good to be found in the world, by means of which it becomes most like to God, is the referring of all things to God, a referring which, proceeding from God, governs all created beings, and directs the single parts toward the whole, and the whole toward God, the highest Good.² What appears therefore to our intellect and in reference to its proximate cause to be *accidental*, is so only under this aspect, but not so, when considered in its relation to the supreme, universal cause.³

The crown of all creation is *man*. *What is man?* This is a very old, and still ever new question. The answer given by materialists, who say that the soul is a "complex of the co-operation of many substances, endowed with various powers and qualities" (Mole-

¹ Summa I., q. 45, a. 2, ad 1: Antiqui philosophi non consideraverunt nisi emanationem effectuum particularium a causis particularibus, quas necesse est praesupponere aliquid in sua actione. Et secundum hoc erat eorum opinio, ex nihilo nihil fieri. Sed tamen hoc locum non habet in prima emanatione ab universali rerum principio.

² Summa I., q. 22, a. 1.

³ 1. c. a. 2, ad 1: Inquantum aliquis effectus ordinem aliqujus causae particularis effugit, dicitur esse casuale vel fortuitum respectu causae particularis; sed respectu causae universalis, a cujus ordine subtrahi non potest, dicitur esse provisum.

schott), was known to St. Thomas. He asks whether the soul cannot be conceived as the result of the mixture of humors (*complexio*), and emphatically denies it.¹ We apprehend the essence of the human soul by meditating on its faculties; but the soul is endowed with a faculty, which greatly transcends every sensible faculty, and which is not exercised by the organs of sense, and this is the faculty of reason. The rational soul thinks, and by thinking apprehends the universal, supersensible and necessary, which does not appear in the sensible things as such;² it apprehends even the sensible in a supersensible manner.³

¹ *Contra gent.*, II., 63.

² *Summa I.*, q. 75, a. 5: *Omne, quod recipitur in aliquo, recipitur in eo per modum recipientis.*

³ *Summa I.*, q. 85, a. 1: *Intellectus humanus non est actus alicujus organi, sed tamen est quaedam virtus animae, quae est forma corporis Et ideo proprium ejus est cognoscere formam in materia quidem corporali individualiter existentem, non tamen prout est in tali materia Et ideo necesse est dicere, quod intellectus noster intelligit materialia abstrahendo a phantasmatibus; et per materialia sic considerata in immaterialium quandam cognitionem pervenimus. Summa I., q. 75, a. 2: Manifestum est quod homo per intellectum cognoscere potest naturas omnium corporum. Quod autem potest cognoscere aliqua, oportet, ut nihil eorum habeat in sua natura, quia illud, quod inesset ei naturaliter, impedire cognitionem aliorum Si igitur principium intellectuale haberet in se naturam alicujus corporis, non posset omnia corpora cognoscere. Omne autem corpus habet aliquam naturam determinatam. Impossibile est igitur,*

The intellect could not apprehend the universal and necessary, if it were in any way encumbered with something material, since the material and the sensible, apprehend only the material and the sensible.¹ By the manner in which a faculty is exercised, we may form conclusions as to its composition. Every faculty acts according to the manner of its being; thus the object and the mode of our cognition prove the simplicity and spirituality of the human soul.² The selfconsciousness of the rational soul also proves this. The intellect makes its own activity the object of thoughtful meditation, and thus understands its own activity and its own essence, which a sensible faculty is incapable of doing.³ The Florentine

quod principium intellectuale sit corpus. Et similiter impossibile est, quod intelligat per organum corporeum, quia natura determinata illius organi corporei prohiberet cognitionem omnium corporum.

¹ Summa I., q. 75, a. 5: Si anima intellectiva esset composita ex materia et forma, formae rerum reciperentur in ea ut individuales; et sic non cognosceret nisi singulare, sicut accidit in potentiis sensitivis, quae recipiunt formas rerum in organo corporali.

² Summa I., q. 75, a. 2: Nihil potest per se operari, nisi quod per se subsistit. . . . Unde eo modo aliquid operatur, quo est. . . . Relinquitur igitur, animam humanam quae dicitur intellectus vel mens, esse aliquid incorporeum et subsistens.

³ Quaest. disp., De verit. q. 10, a. 8: In hoc aliquis percipit se animam habere et vivere et esse, quod percipit se sentire et intelligere et alia hujusmodi vitae opera exercere, unde dicit philosophus. . . . Intelligimus, quoniam intelligimus. Contra gent., II., 29.

poet points to the great importance of the self-consciousness of our soul as a proof of its spirituality, besides its vegetative and sensitive faculties:

And forms an individual soul, that
lives,

And feels and bends reflective on itself.¹

And to this may be added another reason. The senses tire under continuous impressions, they are injured and rendered unfit to receive impressions by the too great intensity of the objects; but the intellectual pleasure increases under increased activity, and the brighter the light of truth appears to us, the more is our mind urged on to action.²

If the human soul is an incorporeal being, a being totally independent of matter, a *spiritual* being, then it is *immortal*. It can be such, for the object of its activity is the universal, the necessary, the eternal; it can be such, for in the mode of its activity it is independent of the body; it can be such, because, as a simple being, it cannot be corrupted either of itself, or as a consequence of the corruption

¹ Purg. XXV., 76.

² Contra gent., II., 66: Sensus corrumpitur ab excellenti sensibili. Intellectus autem non corrumpitur ab intelligibilis excellentia; quin imo qui intelligit majora, potest melius postmodum minora intelligere. Cf. Suppl. q. 85, a. 2. ad 2; Arist., De anima III., 4.

of the body.¹ Therefore the soul cannot cease to exist. True, there is a possibility of the rational soul being annihilated, because its essence and its existence are not one, as in God; God can therefore, for He has given it existence, also withdraw the same.² But the glory of God reveals itself, not by destroying, but by upholding His creation.³ The soul, by its nature has within itself the idea of immortality, as also the indestructible desire for the same; but nature does nothing in vain. Those beings, that know of the present moment only, strive only after the present; they do not desire an everlasting duration. Those beings, on the contrary, that know of an everlasting duration, desire the same, and that necessarily. And for this reason it is impossible for them to cease to exist.⁴ The spiritual faculties (intellect and will) remain even after the separation of the soul from the body; the sensible faculties, on the contrary, remain in the soul only virtually.⁵

¹ S. I., q. 75, a. 6.

² Summa I., q. 104, a. 3.

³ S. I., q. 104, a. 4.: *Simpliciter dicendum est, quod nihil omnino in nihilum redigetur.*

⁴ *Contra gent.*, II., 79.

⁵ Summa I., q. 77, a. 8: *Quaedam potentiae sunt in conjuncto sicut in subjecto, sicut omnes potentiae sensitivae partis et nutritivae. Destructo autem subjecto non potest accidens remanere. Unde corrupto conjuncto non manent hujusmodi potentiae actu, sed virtute tantum manent in anima sicut in principio vel radice.*

When Lachesis hath spun the thread,
the soul
Takes with her both the human and
divine,
Memory, intelligence and will, in act
Far keener than before, the other powers
Inactive all and mute.¹

Thus does St. Thomas answer the three great questions; Who is God? What is the world? What is man?

Reason does not give the final answer. The Angelic Doctor remarks: "There is a *threefold* knowledge of God: the first is obtained by the contemplation of creation, and this by the natural light of our reason; the second is received, when divine Truth reveals itself to us, not indeed in the fulness of its own light but under the veil of faith; the third and the highest will be ours, when it will be vouchsafed to us to behold perfectly that which we now firmly apprehend by faith."²

Here is the point, where *theology meets philosophy*, and revelation joins natural reason, in order to form an alliance, by which philosophy is to be brought to its greatest perfection. By its very nature the human intellect yearns to discover the cause, when once it has seen the effect, and this not only

¹ Purg., XXV., 81, sq.

² Contra gent., IV., 1.

with regard to the individual, but also with regard to the universe. And therefore man naturally strives to acquire a knowledge of God.¹ For this reason he wishes to see God, and in this vision to find his beatitude. The natural power of his reason does not elevate him to where he could behold God as He is; this is beyond the sphere of every created intelligence, because like can be known perfectly only by its like, and the infinite by the infinite.² Now, then, God, the first truth, descends by His grace down to man, in order to give man an opportunity to know of His existence and of His glory. Because the soul of man, on account of its spirituality is akin to God,³ and because it seeks in the vision of God its highest perfection,⁴ therefore God diffuses over it a new and higher light, which illumines man on this

¹ Summa I., q. 12, a. 1.

² Summa I., q. 12, a. 4: Si modus essendi alicujus rei cognitae excedat modum naturae cognoscentis, oportet quod cognitio illius rei sit supra naturam illius cognoscentis.

³ Summa I. II., q. 110, a. 4.

⁴ Summa I., q. 12, a. 1: Cum ultima hominis beatitudo in altissima ejus operatione consistat, quae est operatio intellectus, si nunquam essentiam Dei videre potest intellectus creatus, vel nunquam beatitudinem obtinebit, vel in alio ejus beatitudo consistet, quam in Deo; quod est alienum a fide.

earth by faith, and in the life to come by glory.¹ Thus the human soul participates in the beatitude of God, thus faith becomes here on earth the soul's preparation to enter this realm of higher intelligence, to behold God, and fully to enjoy beatitude.² This latter therefore consists in knowledge, love and enjoyment.

Light intellectual replete with love,
Love of true happiness replete with joy.
Joy, that transcends all sweetness of delight.³

To know God by the natural powers of our intellect, to know God by faith, to know God by vision, these are the three stations, over

¹ Summa I., q. 12, a. 5: Omne quod elevatur ad aliquid, quod excedit suam naturam, oportet, quod disponatur aliqua dispositione, quae sit supra suam naturam Cum autem aliquis intellectus creatus videt Deum per essentiam, ipsa Dei essentia fit forma intelligibilis intellectus. Unde oportet, quod aliqua dispositio supernaturalis superaddatur ei ad hoc, quod elevetur ad tantam sublimitatem. Cum igitur virtus intellectus creati non sufficiat ad Dei essentiam videndam oportet, quod ex divina gratia superaddatur ei virtus intelligendi. Et hoc augmentum virtutis intellectivae illuminationem intellectus vocamus, sicut et ipsum intelligibile vocatur lumen vel lux. Et istud est lumen, de quo dicitur (Apoc. 21, 23), quod claritas Dei illuminabit illam, scilicet societatem beatorum Deum videntium. Et secundum hoc lumen efficiuntur deiformes i. e. Deo similes secundum illud (I., Joan. 3, 2.): Cum apparuerit, similes ei erimus, et videbimus eum sicuti est.

² Summa I., q. 12, a. 6; Suppl. q. 95, a. 5.

³ Parad. XXX., 41, sq.

which man travels to his last goal, — God. Thus faith stands in the middle, and builds the bridge between earth and heaven, and becomes a helping-hand to reason, which by its aid rises to all that is highest and noblest. Thus we clearly understand the importance, dignity and necessity of faith in the established order of Providence, which has destined man to the beatific vision.

Even if it were not man's destiny to behold God, even if the natural knowledge of God were the perfection of our intellect, nevertheless faith would be necessary in order to give to the intellect its befitting perfection, the acquisition of which would indeed be possible in itself, but which, as we know from history, it would never attain. Revelation must help to answer the questions, which arise in the great events of religious and moral life, as the teacher must help the pupil. St. Thomas has in different ways proved the moral impossibility to attain at perfect certainty by purely natural research.¹ Since philosophical investigation requires much study, acumen, diligence and time, qualities that are seldom found combined, there would be very few, who could acquire truth, and these few only after a long time. And yet the knowledge of God is the most

¹ Contra gent. I., 4; Summa I., q. 1, a. 1.

necessary of all, and that at the very entrance into life. And since the realm of truth, where research is carried on, is replete with obscurities, the little that man would learn about God, would never be free from manifold errors. Therefore it was consistent with the goodness of God to instruct man by revelation in those truths, which, theoretically speaking, he could have acquired also by purely natural investigation.

In the first three books of his work "Contra gentiles" St. Thomas has grandly developed his system of *apologetics*. Two thoughts form its leading principles. The act of faith itself is obscure, and it is the free will, which, assisted by grace, moves the intellect to assent to the objects of revelation; but the motives which prove to us that we can and must believe in God, are *certain* and *evident*.¹ Thus faith is a *rational* faith, and is free, and is a highly moral and meritorious act;² but faith is more certain than

¹ II. II., q. 1, a. 4, ad 2: Non enim crederet (homo), nisi *videret* ea esse credenda vel propter evidentiam signorum vel propter aliquid hujusmodi.

² I. II., q. 17, a. 6: Sunt quaedam apprehensa, quae non adeo convincunt intellectum, quin possit assentire vel dissentire vel saltem assensum vel dissensum suspendere propter aliquam causam, et in talibus assensus vel dissensus in nostra potestate est et sub imperio cadit. — In III. Sent., dist. 23, q. 2, a. 3, sol. 3: In scientia **conclusionum** causatur determinatio ex hoc quod conclusio secundum actum

purely human certitude, because God, the first truth, is its principle. That favorite subterfuge of rationalism and indifferentism, so often repeated since Rousseau's time: "I serve God as my reason dictates," was known to St. Thomas and refuted by him. He not only expatiates on the insufficiency of our purely natural intellectual powers for building up a natural religion, but he also emphasizes another and far deeper reason, for the absolute necessity of faith. Faith is the road along which God wishes to lead man to his eternal destiny; He does not wish another road, and therefore there is no other; every other progress, no matter how great, is a step "*praeter viam*," as St. Augustine once said.¹ St. Thomas says:

rationis in principia per se visa resolvitur, in fide vero ex hoc, quod voluntas intellectui imperat In his ergo quae per fidem credimus, ratio voluntatem inclinans est ipsa veritas prima sive Deus, cui creditur, quae habet majorem firmitatem quam lumen intellectus humani Et ideo habet fides majorem certitudinem quantum ad firmitatem adhaesionis, quam sit certitudo scientiae vel intellectus, quamvis in scientia et intellectu sit major evidentia eorum, quibus assentitur. — II. II., q. 2, a. 9, ad 3: Ille qui credit, habet sufficiens inductivum ad credendum. Inducitur enim auctoritate divinae doctrinae miraculis confirmatae et, quod plus est, interiori instinctu Dei invitantis. Unde non leviter credit. Tamen non habet sufficiens inductivum ad sciendum, et ideo non tollitur ratio meriti. — Contra gent. III., 40: In cognitione fidei principalitatem habet voluntas.

¹ Sermo 169, c. 15: Melius it claudus in via, quam cursor

“Since the end, the vision of God, surpasses the measure of human nature, the principles, given by nature, are not sufficient to bring man to his beatitude; for this reason God must give him new, higher principles, which are to lead him to his supernatural end, as the natural principles do to his natural end; and these are the theological virtues.”¹

“But I do not understand this,” says *ratio-
nalism*. And St. Thomas answers: It is not the human intellect that is the standard by which we are to measure truth, but the intellect of God, the first and highest truth, is the standard.² Moreover, all knowledge of things divine, and be it ever so slight, is a great gain for the intellect, even if it does not fully comprehend them, but only knows them confusedly by faith.³ It is the very mysteries, which our mind is not able to fathom, that place God before us in His infinite, all-surpassing majesty.⁴ Therefore the poet, musing on this, says:

Seek not the “wherefore,” race of human-
kind;

Could you have seen the whole, no need
had been

For Mary, to bring forth.⁵

praeter viam; Sermo 141, c. 4: Melius est in via claudicare, quam praeter viam fortiter ambulare.

¹ Summa I. II., q. 62, a. 1; II II, q. 2. a. 3.

² Summa I., q. 16, a. 5.

³ Contra gent. I., 5.

⁴ Contra gent. I. c.

⁵ Purg. III, 35.

In his “*Summa contra Gentiles*” St. Thomas lays the foundation, and in his “*Summa Theologica*” he rears the wonderful edifice of theological science. This latter work is the ripest fruit of the studies of the Saint; written in the evening of his life, and therefore unfinished, it gives us the results of the researches of his whole life; the philosophical, patristic and theological labors of his predecessors, especially those of Alexander of Hales and Albert the Great were required to make possible such a singular, highly perfect, systematic exposition of the whole field of theology. His method is strictly dialectic; first he states the problem, then he takes his proofs from Scripture, Tradition, fundamental theological truths, and even from philosophy, and basing on these proofs, he gives the solution, develops the arguments and answers to objections and difficulties. Never before the days of St. Thomas had a work of a similar character, in which strict criticism was so admirably blended with perfect clearness and perspicuity, been known to Western Europe.

It has not been uncommon to find fault with the strictly dialectic method and the form of syllogistic demonstration invariably employed by the Angelic Doctor and his followers. It must be admitted that this manner of writing sometimes impresses us

with a certain harshness; nevertheless this very method, which holds the exposition strictly within the bounds of logic and a certain and universally acknowledged terminology, possesses the merit of having preserved his writings from the wide-spread, corrupting mannerism of many modern philosophers and theologians, who have been judged by the poet, when he says:

For there precisely where ideas fail,

A word comes opportunely into play.¹

This well-arranged, thoughtful construction of his system, which embraces the knowledge of his own time and of previous ages, of an Augustine and a Plato as well as of an Aristotle, breathing to a certain extent the very fragrance of poetry which the poet in his "Divine Comedy" knew so well to appreciate, is the precious legacy which the Saint has left to posterity. It consists of three principal parts: 1. on God; 2. on the motion of the rational creature toward God; 3. on Christ, who is the way by which we go to God.

There are especially *three advantages*, which secure for the "Theological Summa" immortality. In the first place, it is its wonderful *construction*, with its rich and yet clear and transparent ramifications, which find their visible expression in the cathedrals of

¹ Goethe, Faust.

the "Early Gothic," in which the Saint had prayed. Furthermore, we find throughout, the form *congruous* to the contents, and the expression to the thought; idea and word are fully consonant, and it is hardly possible more briefly and better to express his teachings than with his very words. Thirdly and chiefly, he excels his followers because of his *moderation* in the choice and development of his matter; overspeculation, which as wanton cockle overgrows the fundamental forms of a system, and gives rise to a multitude of sterile questions and distinctions, as is found especially in Duns Scotus († 1308), St. Thomas's rival, and which characterizes the decline of scholasticism, was unknown to him. In a grand, masterly way he establishes the system of Christian truth; he dives into the very essence of every question, develops it up to a certain point, and enables us to grasp it in its whole depth and meaning. Before the unsearchable he stops, awestricken and reverent, as, for instance, in the doctrine of grace and predestination, in the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity and of the Incarnation etc. He returns to the word of God as found in the Scriptures and Tradition, which alone announces to us the divine mysteries.¹

By the second part of his "Theological

¹ Summa III., q. 1, a. 3.

Summa," in which he treats of the *motion of the rational creature toward God*, he became the founder of a perfect system of Christian *ethics*. Meditate, my young friend, for a moment on this part.

The highest principle of morality is: He, who acts rationally, intends some end.¹ This end, toward which all strive, is the good; but only the Highest Good, which is God, can completely satisfy our longing, since all created good is good only by participation, not in itself.² Therefore every thing tends toward God, the free and conscious creature of its own free will, the unconscious creation involuntarily; but, above all, this tendency is manifested by the mind, which finds its highest good and beatitude in the knowledge and love of God.³ Thus a mighty, inex-

¹ Contra gent. III., 2: Omne agens in agendo intendit aliquem finem.

² I. II., q. 2, a. 8: Objectum voluntatis, quae est appetitus humanus, est universale bonum, sicut objectum intellectus est universale verum. Ex quo patet, quod nihil potest quietare voluntatem hominis, nisi bonum universale, quod non invenitur in aliquo creato, sed solum in Deo, quia omnis creatura habet bonitatem participatam. Unde Deus solus voluntatem hominis implere potest.

³ Summa I. II., q. 1, a. 8: Homo et aliae rationales creaturae consequuntur ultimum finem cognoscendo et amando Deum, quod non competit aliis creaturis, quae adipiscuntur ultimum finem, in quantum participant aliquam similitudinem Dei, secundum quod sunt, vel vivunt, vel etiam cognoscunt.

haustible and profound love draws every creature to God as to its end; everything that loves, loves Him alone, consciously or unconsciously. To seek beatitude there, where it really is, is the essence of morality, and sanctity is therefore nothing else than the order of love willed by God;¹ but the aberration of love is sin. Sin proceeds from passion, which blinds the eye, so that it believes it sees in the earthly good its highest good.²

And if aught else
Your love seduces, t'is but that it shows
Some ill-mark'd vestige of that primal
beam.³

The highest principle and rule of ethics is God;⁴ He announces His presence in a twofold principle, which is the measure and

¹ Quaest. disp., De malo, q. 3, a. 1: *Peccatum provenit ex eo, quod voluntas deficit a debito fine per hoc, quod in finem indebitum tendit.*

² I. II., q. 27, a. 1, ad 1: *Malum nunquam amatur nisi sub ratione boni, scilicet in quantum est secundum quid bonum et apprehenditur ut simpliciter bonum Et per hunc modum homo diligit iniquitatem, in quantum per iniquitatem adipiscitur aliquod bonum, puta delectationem vel pecuniam vel aliquid hujusmodi. — Summa I. II., q. 78, a. 1, ad 2: Malum non potest esse secundum se intentum ab aliquo; potest tamen esse intentum ad vitandum aliud malum vel ad consequendum aliud bonum.*

³ Dante, Parad., V., 10 sq.

⁴ Contra gent., III., 17: *Quod omnia ordinantur in unum finem, qui est Deus.*

the standard of human actions. The one appears in man himself and the other approaches him from without. The former comprises conscience and virtue, the latter consists in law and grace. By his conscience, man judges of the moral worth of his actions, on the strength of the testimony of his practical intellect.¹ From the habit of virtue proceeds a certain assurance and facility in virtuous acts.² The habit of virtue appears in the theological virtues, whose immediate object is God Himself, toward Whom man tends by faith, hope and charity; as also in the moral virtues, which directly perfect the will of man. The first of the moral virtues is *prudence*; this is the virtue of practical reason; the second is *justice*; this performs the moral act. Since the passions oppose the performing of good actions, *temperance* moderates the lower appetites, and *fortitude* overcomes all opposition. These four virtues form the hinges, on which all moral life moves. And for this reason they are styled the *cardinal virtues*.³

The first of the exterior principles is the *law*. It is the ordination of the reason to-

¹ Summa I., q. 79, a. 13.

² Summa I. II., q. 55, a. 1: Potentie rationales, quae sunt propriae hominis, determinantur ad actus per habitus, et ideo virtutes humanae habitus sunt.

³ Summa I. II., q. 61, a. 1, 2, 3.

ward the universal good, established by Him, Who cares for the universe.¹ The standard for the justice of all human laws is the *natural law*; whatever is opposed to this law is not law, but a corruption of law.² The natural law has its prototype, its foundation and binding-power in the *eternal law of God*; it is therefore an image of the eternal law in *rational creation*, by which the latter receives its moral inclination and the consciousness of its destination.³

To the natural law there is added the positive divine law of the Old and New Testament. Since the end of man is supernatural, God leads him to it, not only by the natural and positive law, but also by a rule which has come directly from Him.⁴ His law admits of no exception.⁵ In a most excellent manner, however, Christ has come as our lawgiver; in

¹ Summa I. II., q. 90, a. 4.

² Summa I. II., q. 95, a. 2: Omnis lex humanitus posita in tantum habet de ratione legis, in quantum a lege naturae derivatur. Si vero in aliquo a lege naturali discordet, jam non erit lex, sed legis corruptio.

³ Summa I. II., q. 93, a. 3: In omnibus moventibus ordinatis oportet quod virtus secundi moventis derivetur a virtute moventis primi Cum ergo lex aeterna sit ratio gubernationis in supremo gubernante, necesse est, quod omnes rationes gubernationis, quae sunt in inferioribus gubernantibus, a lege aeterna deriventur.

⁴ Summa I. II., q. 93, a. 1.

⁵ Summa I. II., q. 93, a. 5, 6.

150 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

This is not as yet sufficient. As in the world of matter He is the first motor, Who, Himself unmoved, moves everything else, Who has cast the planets forth into space and placed the stars along their courses, so also He leads the world of spirits by supernatural power, by His *grace*, toward their supernatural end.¹ Grace is a new, supernatural principle of life, implanted in the depth of the soul,² which, with victorious power, together *with* and through *our* liberty, moves the will toward the good, and leads us with infallible, but not necessary, certainty toward our ultimate end, — the vision of God.³ From grace proceeds the first *impulse* to a good act; without it there is not even the will, nor the thought of a good act; in it there is all progress in the moral life, by it alone perseverance and final completion.⁴ Thus God is the object of the beatitude of all beatitude, and the energetic principle, which leads to it, and, in a manner less perfect, our true happiness even here on earth.

¹ Contra gent. III., 147.

² Summa I. II., q. 109 per totum.

³ Summa I., q. 83, a. 1, ad 3: Sicut (Deus) naturalibus causis movendo, eas non aufert, quin actus earum sint naturales, ita movendo, causas voluntarias non aufert, quin actiones earum sint voluntariae, sed potius hoc in eis facit; operatur enim in unoquoque secundum ejus proprietatem.

⁴ Summa I. II., q. 114, a. 9.

True it is that temporal evil befalls the just as well as the wicked; but only to the latter it is an evil, to the former on the contrary, it is a blessing, a helping hand, leading them to heaven.¹

Man is not a solitary being; his nature and destiny require life in *society*. Now, this society needs a leader toward the common good, which is not only political, but also moral. Only that government therefore is just, which intends the common welfare; the government which promotes private interests, becomes *tyranny*.² Society exists only by virtue of the authority which orders and directs it; therefore by virtue of the natural and divine law, it can command obedience.³ All goods, offered by human society, are only the means by which to attain the highest and ultimate end of mankind, — the possession of God; but this we acquire not by earthly

¹ Summa I. II., q. 114, a. 10 ad 4: Omnia aequaeveniunt bonis et malis, quantum ad ipsam substantiam bonorum vel malorum temporalium; sed non quantum ad finem, quia boni per huiusmodi manuducuntur ad beatitudinem, non autem mali.

² Opusc. 16. De regim. princ. I., 1: Si liberorum multitudo a regente ad bonum commune multitudinis ordinetur, erit regimen rectum et justum, quale convenit liberis. Si vero non ad bonum commune multitudinis, sed ad bonum privatum regentis regimen ordinetur, erit regimen injustum et perversum,

³ Summa II. II., q. 104, a. 1.

152 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

efforts, but only by divine power. Therefore those also must be subject to Christ and His vicar, the Pope, to whom the care for our supreme and ultimate end has been entrusted, who provide for the proximate, worldly end of man. Therefore the temporal power is *in itself* independent and God-given; *but with regard to all that, which has bearing on man's eternal welfare*, it is dependent on the spiritual power.¹

Rome, that turn'd it unto good,
Was wont to boast two suns, whose
several beams
Cast light on either way, the world's
and God's.²

¹ Thomas, In II. Libr. Sent., dist. 44, q. 2, a. 3, ad 4: Potestas spiritualis et secularis utraque deducitur a potestate divina, et ideo in tantum secularis potestas est sub spirituali, in quantum ei est a Deo supposita scil. in his, quae ad salutem animae pertinent, et ideo in his magis est obediendum potestati spirituali quam seculari. In his autem, quae ad bonum civile pertinent, est magis obediendum potestati seculari, quam spirituali, secundum illud Matth. 22, 21. — De regim. princ. I., 14: Quia sacerdotium gentilium et totus divinorum cultus erat propter temporalia bona conquirenda, quae omnia ordinantur ad multitudinis bonum commune, cujus regi cura incumbit, convenienter sacerdotes gentilium regibus subdebantur. Sed et quia in veteri lege promittebantur bona terrena non a daemonibus, sed a Deo vero religioso populo exhibenda, inde et in lege veteri sacerdotes regibus leguntur fuisse subjecti. Sed in nova lege est sacerdotium altius, per quod homines traducuntur ad bona coelestia, unde et in lege Christi reges debent sacerdotibus esse subjecti.

² Purg. XVI., 109 sq. — De monarchia III.. c. 16: Quae

I have finished, my dear Timothy. In a few lines I have drawn a picture of the God-view and world-view of the Angelic Doctor; it will be your duty, and that the duty of your whole life, to develop this sketch, and to ponder over the spirit of this saint. Do not fear, that I am hereby advocating a system of returning to primitive ways and of theological archaism. To go back to the principles of St. Thomas is not *retrogression*, but progress; whoever retraces the erring steps he has heretofore made, does not recede, but goes forward. The frame, in which the picture of his philosophico-theological system is encased, is broad enough to admit all the certain results of researches made since his time, and to allow itself to be thereby completed, developed and perfected. Justly Leo XIII. has admonished us "to receive readily and gratefully everything useful, which has been invented in modern times."¹

quidem veritas non sic stricte recipienda est, ut Romanus Princeps in aliquo Romano Pontifici non subjiat, quum mortalis ista felicitas quodammodo ad immortalem felicitatem ordinetur. Illa igitur reverentia Caesar utatur ad Petrum, qua primogenitus filius debet uti ad patrem, ut luce paternae gratiae illustratus, virtuosius orbem terrarum irradiet, cui ab illo solo praefectus est, qui est omnium spiritualium et temporalium gubernator (ed. C. Witte, Vindob. 1874, p. 140.).

¹ l. c.

Who would deny, that since the time of St. Thomas great progress has been made in the natural sciences and in history? "The Master of those who know" is now more clear to us than he was in by-gone ages, when the Aristotelian investigations had not reached their present development. Those questions also, which are not influenced to any great extent by the empiric sciences, are capable of development, if only for this reason, that during the past six centuries they have been treated under diverse headings, have been solved more or less faultily, and therefore allow of both intensive and extensive development. Three hundred years ago one of the most enthusiastic pupils of St. Thomas, Melchior Canus, had already added to the theology of St. Thomas a new discipline, the *Loci theologici*; how much more may not this be the case with the philosophy of St. Thomas?



LETTER VIII.

Theology and the Natural Sciences.

Why study the natural sciences? you ask. If the study of these sciences has always been of great importance for a theological education, it is certainly so in our days, and will continue to be so for a long time to come. And the reason is found not merely in the pretended opposition, so much insisted on of late, between the natural sciences and theology. If this pretended opposition were the only reason why you should take up this branch of studies, no matter to what extent you would occupy yourself therewith, you would hardly derive much satisfaction. Moreover, since in the numerous branches thereof so many objections crop out, it would be asking something unreasonable and impossible, were anyone to demand that you should possess a thorough knowledge and perfect understanding of them all. In fact, the most highly educated natural scientist would be compelled to confess himself incompetent for the task. The principal branches, mineralogy, botany, zoology, physics, physiology,

156 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

anatomy, chemistry, biology, astronomy etc. have indeed had each its own representatives, who, by examining and studying these respective sciences from different sides, have established new departments of science. No, you are not supposed to study the natural sciences in this manner. In its innermost essence our theology is by no means opposed to them; on the contrary, from the beginning, theology has regarded them as so many allies, always looking upon the results of their researches as so many means of confirming its own doctrines. Where conflicts have arisen, they have sprung neither from genuine theology nor from true science; this thought was already urged by St. Augustine, when he said: "Whatever the philosophers can prove about the nature of things, will not be found contrary to the teachings of our holy books." And he adds the admonition "not to let ourselves be seduced by the words of false science, nor to become disquieted by false and superstitious opinions in religion."¹

¹ De genesi ad lit. I., 21: Didici non haerere homini in respondendo secundum fidem, quod respondendum est hominibus, qui calumniari libris nostrae salutis affectant; ut quidquid ipsi de natura rerum veracibus documentis demonstrare potuerint, ostendamus nostris litteris non esse contrarium. Quidquid autem de quibuslibet suis voluminibus his nostris litteris, id est, catholicae fidei contrarium protulerint, aut aliqua etiam facultate ostendamus, aut nulla dubitatione credamus esse falsissimum;

It is not this that I have in view, when I admonish you, my young friend, to begin the study of the natural sciences. Let St. Augustine give you the reason for it: “It often happens that one who is not a Christian has some knowledge derived from very clear arguments or from the evidence of his senses about the earth, the heavens and the other elements, about the movements and changes, the size and distances of the stars, about the decrease of the moon and of the sun, the course of years and time, the nature of animals, plants and minerals and other such things. It is very *unseemly* and *detrimental* and *greatly to be avoided*, that a Christian, who pretends to speak according to the Scriptures, should give utterance to absurd views on these points, so that the pagan, hearing such sheer nonsense, can hardly refrain from laughing. It is not only hard for the Christian to bear, if he is ridiculed for his erroneous opinions, but, what is more to be regretted is the thought, that by such ignorant utterances the pagans should be led to believe that our sacred writers teach such errors; our sacred writers are forthwith looked upon as ignorant, are blamed and despised to

atque ita teneamus Mediatorem nostrum, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae atque scientiae reconditi (Coll. 2, 3.), ut neque falsae philosophiae loquacitate seducamur, neque falsae religionis superstitione terreamur.

the great injury of those for whose welfare we are solicitous. For, whenever they see a Christian holding erroneous views, in matters, in which they are well versed, and hear him adducing Scripture in favor of his opinion, how can they be made to believe these Scriptures speaking of the resurrection of the dead, of the hope of an eternal life and of heaven, after they have come already to regard them as teaching fallacies concerning those things, which they themselves have learned from observation or unquestionable evidence? *What our intelligent brethren suffer by the prating of such men, cannot be adequately expressed*; for, when the pagans find fault with them on account of their erroneous opinions, and refute them, they forthwith appeal to the Sacred Scriptures in order to prove their reckless and evidently erroneous views; they quote verbatim many passages as proofs for their assertions, but they know not of what they speak or what they assert.”¹

Does it not seem as if St. Augustine wished in advance to depict those, who in later centuries and up to the present day were to oppose the accredited and universally acknowledged facts of the natural sciences, and stubbornly to retain obsolete views, and, by trying to

¹ August. De gen. ad lit. I., 19.

base them on the authority of the Bible, jeopardize its sacred authority? Our theology is too comprehensive, and rests on too solid a foundation as not to open its eyes to the mysteries of nature, which ever unveil themselves more and more; it will rather rejoice in the grand results attained by the natural sciences, and recognize in them the opening of ever new pages of the book of nature, on which the glory of the Creator is written in clearer characters and brighter lines. And furthermore, viewing more widely and circumspectly the whole realm of creation, it will say with the psalmist: "O Lord, our God, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth!"¹

In this respect also scholasticism was guided by the right motives. Philosophy, as understood by it, comprised not only mathematics, but also the entire field of nature under the name of physics;² logic, physics, metaphysics, ethics, formed the encyclopedia of philosophy; logic, it said, teaches us to apply our reason correctly; physics has the world, metaphysics the founder of the world as the object of its meditation; ethics provides the rules for a moral life. Even Bacon of Verulam, Descar-

¹ Ps. 8, 1.

² Arist., *Metaph.* VI., 1.

tes and Newton speak of a *Philosophia naturalis*. They were right; philosophy and the natural sciences are not opposed to one another, they do not exclude, but include each other. Of course, their mutual relation cannot be considered in the same manner as it was in the time of Aristotle and scholasticism, and this is due to the extraordinary expansion and wonderful discoveries made by the natural sciences. Although their modality has changed, still the fundamental relation of the one to the other has remained the same. St. Thomas gives the reason of this: *Natura est opus intelligentiæ; therefore the contemplation of it is the office of philosophy*. Now, in what relation do the natural sciences and philosophy stand to each other?

The object of the natural sciences is the universal visible creation. They observe the individual happenings in it, compare and put them in order, and try to establish exactly, i. e. with mathematical accuracy, their laws, as also to reduce the laws themselves, as much as possible, to a common, simple efficiency, and then to comprehend this efficiency in a supreme and ultimately uniting cause. Philosophy also begins with experience; this is, as St. Thomas says, the material cause of our cognition;¹ here then we find the *first point*

¹ Summa I., q. 84, a. 6, ad 2: *Quodammodo materia causæ.*

of *contact between the natural sciences and philosophy*. This is not sufficient. Not satisfied with the fact "that" sensible phenomena exist, the natural sciences seek to investigate their *laws*, to find an answer to the "wherefore." And here they meet with philosophy for the *second* time; for what else is law, but the *invisible* in the *visible*, the *unchanging* in the *changeable*, the *universal* in the *particular*, in one word: what is law but a thought, which only the intellect apprehends, and acknowledges as the necessary in the accidental? Yes, certain universal and necessary ideas — being and existence, unity and order, end and means, cause and effect, the logical laws, the idea of law and of legality in general — are not sensibly apprehensible, not sensibly to be treated; *they are the seal of the intellect*. It was not the diligent observation of the stars, nor the far-seeing telescope that created the "*mécanique céleste*," but it was the *calculating mind*. For this reason St. Augustine could already point to mathematics, which we apply in exact investigation, whilst opposing the sensualists of his day, which, in as far as it is mathematics pure and simple, is the fruit of the thinking mind.¹

But we have not yet finished. The an-

¹ De lib. arbitrio II., 8.

cients already searched for the ultimate principle of harmony in this world; therefore Aristotle ascends from the phenomena up to one Last, Highest Singularity, to God, in Whom and by Whom all powers of nature work in an orderly unity, similar to an army under one general.¹ The exact sciences of the present day also are confronted with the question: Which is the last, highest power, from which all others have their origin? Only after solving this question will they arrive at a knowledge of the harmony of the universe. Here is the point where *philosophy holds out its hand to the natural sciences*, and passes on to the highest questions of all knowledge.

From the remarks made you will understand, my young friend, how intimate the points of contact are between philosophy and the natural sciences. In the observation of individual natural phenomena, especially in the discovery and development of its laws by induction and deduction, philosophy is a helping hand to the natural sciences; but it goes further than this. It ascends from the sphere of the sensible to a higher one, to the world of the intellect. The eternal, necessary ideas, which have their application also, to a certain extent, in the sensible world,

¹ Metaph. XII., c. 10.

but not in it alone, the most universal notions, such as being and existence, essence and appearance, substance and accident, space and time, finite and infinite, these form the object of its contemplation; and, never ceasing in its course of investigation, it finally arrives at that point, where it is confronted by the question about the ultimate cause of all things.

Here it is where philosophy and the natural sciences *again meet*. They have gone different ways; observation, experiment, exact investigation on the one hand, clear formation of thought, the establishing of the ontological destiny and categories of being, the profound viewing of the finite and accidental in its relation to the infinite and absolute, on the other hand. Logic, without which neither can carry on its work, is the *mark of identification, which both of them have in common*, giving testimony of their common origin, the intellect. Correctly therefore the disciples of Aristotle called logic τὸ ὄργανον τῆς φιλοσοφίας. Thus philosophy, as the science of human thought, and therefore the most universal, the cause of every other science, forms the foundation of every natural investigation and makes it possible; and, moreover, it is philosophy, which collects the various results of particular investigations and develops them toward a solution of the world-problem.

It is perfectly true that the field of scientific research has at present become far more extensive than anyone dared to dream of even at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The old trunks of the traditional scientific disciplines are incessantly shooting forth new branches, new fields are continually being opened and new sciences are formed; restlessly the scientists in England, Germany and France, and even in the New World are at work; almost every day gives birth to new results; it is now no longer possible, even for the best talented and most experienced scientist, to compass his own particular branch completely, much less to master foreign ones. It is, in fact, regarded at present as an indication of a scientific bent of mind, to acknowledge one's self a tyro in other branches, in order to show that the great and constant progress of the various scientific disciplines makes it obligatory for us to follow only one particular branch of science, and this, perhaps, in one particular direction only. And this view is entirely justifiable; but it will develop into a momentous error, *if such a special scientist shows himself hostile to every other question and especially to philosophy*, and strives to isolate himself in his particular line of investigation. For, everyone of these particular investiga-

tions touches only the periphery of the human mind and of its life; it does not penetrate to the center. What I have just now denoted as philosophical questions, are, the *universal, human questions*, which Aristotle said are inborn in every man, because he is intelligent, and therefore reflects on the things, and above all on their essence, their origin and their end, and on himself. An attempt to utterly suppress these questions would tend to rob the human mind of its best inheritance, received from nature itself; it would tend to turn man's gaze away from above, whither it is ever striving to raise itself, and to forcibly direct it toward the earth.

Nature will not suffer itself to be treated thus. And for this reason we find the remarkable phenomenon, that the greatest masters in the natural sciences, not satisfied with the results of strictly exact investigation, have tried to arise from the physical description of the world to the metaphysical interpretation of the universe, in order to "unravel the holy riddles of the universe." And just the latest phase of the natural sciences is an evident proof of this. Thus does Darwinism in its different variations call into its service an untold number of particular branches, in order to find therein a confirmation of its fundamental idea of

the transmutation of the species in the struggle for existence and in the natural selection; but the upbuilding of the system of Monism, and its translation to the different fields of human culture-development, of the juridical, ethical, social and religious life, could be accomplished only by enlisting into its service philosophical theorems and suppositions. "Darwinism," a noted naturalist told me years ago, "is not a new natural-scientific system, but *a new religion*." And the celebrated discoverer of the law of preservation of energy, J. R. Mayer, said, "the theory of Darwin has no doubt for this reason found so many adherents in Germany, because it brings grist to the mill of atheism."

Consequently, whilst the natural sciences should not exclude the science of the intellect, the latter must likewise not exclude the former. "The sum-total of experimental knowledge cannot be opposed to a philosophy of nature cultivated in all its parts (if such a cultivation be possible), if this philosophy of nature, consistent with its promises, be but the reasonable understanding of all actual phenomena of the universe. Where contradictions are apparent, the fault will lie either in the shallowness of speculation, or in the arrogance of empiricism, which

claims more to have been demonstrated experimentally, than was really proved.”¹ The diffidence, yea, the utter contempt for philosophy on the part of the natural-scientist set in precisely at the time, when people awakened from the dreamings of so-called natural philosophy and speculative physics advanced by the Fichte-Schelling school, that had attempted to construe *a priori* the phenomena of material creation and endeavored to explain the laws of gravity, caloric, electricity, magnetism etc., according to definite philosophical categories. *Exact investigation alone*, with the help of accurate observation and experiment can advance natural science, as well as philosophy, which then may draw further conclusions, based upon the results thus attained. However, when I say this, I cannot assert, nor do I wish to do so, that the teachers of philosophy and theology must necessarily be fully competent in all these sciences; this would be to demand an impossibility, and if this were insisted upon, the effects would be highly detrimental. It would end in patchwork, in a superficial and petulant nibbling at the different branches of natural science, to the injury of all sound philosophical and theological

¹ A. v. Humboldt, *Kosmos*, I. (Stuttgart and Tuebingen 1845.) p. 69.

168 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

culture, and especially of the natural sciences themselves. Fortunately, this is not necessary, since, by reason of the division of labor, others do this work, and it is only required of the philosopher and theologian that he should have an *open mind* for the established results of natural-scientific research. It is evident, that, to be able to do this, at least an elementary knowledge of physics and of the three kingdoms of nature is absolutely necessary.

We should not be surprised, then, that even the ancients and especially Aristotle, were of this opinion. The contempt, with which until quite recently some people looked down upon his “naïve and childish” views of natural phenomena, has given place to a high veneration for this man, on account of his achievements in natural research. Totally dependent upon himself, without even the simplest instruments, which modern science puts into the hands of the scientists, he made investigations in all fields, and especially in that of zoology, with extraordinary care and precision. The merit which has rendered him immortal, consists in this, that he, first of all, established clearly the method of research by induction (*ἐπαγωγή*) and deduction (*ἀπόδειξις*); that he was the first to penetrate scientifically the entire material of

the natural science of his day. His system of the three kingdoms of nature, as he presented it, has been retained in its essential parts up to the present day. Thus he is the man, "like unto a light-house, rising from out of the surge of manifold contradictory opinions and views, which marks the line of the main land of systematic science, whose light illumines the intellectual darkness of many centuries." R. Snell says: "Whilst Aristotle, were he to arise from the dead, would at first sight view our astronomy, mechanics and physics as a child, nevertheless he would soon discover, that the point of view, from which he contemplated organic nature, has not been notably or materially advanced. It would not be difficult for him to understand everything that modern physiology tells us of organisms as such, and he would hardly feel inclined to humble himself before the modern world on account of his views".¹ It was quite natural that the high esteem which Aristotle commanded in the Christian schools, should have influenced them to adopt also his views on, and his appreciation of the natural sciences. It was precisely the most noted men of the Middle Ages, who warned against over-estimating the authority of the Stagirite in regard to nature's phenomena, and also advised

¹ Die Streitfrage des Materialismus, Jena 1858, p. 8. sq.

observation and experiment. Sine experientia nihil sufficienter sciri potest. Duo sunt enim modi cognoscendi, says Roger Bacon,¹ scilicet per argumentum et experimentum. Argumentum concludit et facit nos concludere quaestionem, sed non certificat, neque removet dubitationem, ut quiescat animus in intuitu veritatis, nisi eam inveniat via experientiae. And Albert the Great, whose words I have already quoted, says: Sententiarum autem, quas ponemus, quasdam quidem ipsi nos experimento probamus, quasdam autem referimus ex dictis eorum, quos comperimus non de facili aliqua dicere, nisi probata per experimentum. Experimentum enim solum certificat in talibus, eo quod tam de particularibus naturis simile haberi non potest.²

It is true, the intellectual sciences, metaphysics and ethics, received more careful attention; but for this we ought to be *deeply grateful to the Catholic schools*, and not censure them for it. On another occasion I have given the words of one of our greatest scientists, who thinks that it is wrong to make the natural sciences a branch of studies in institutions for preparatory education, and who wishes our young people to be led on to a habit of applying their reasoning faculties.

¹ Opus majus, pars VI., c. 1, (ed. S. Jeeb, Londini 1733, p. 445.)

² Cf. note p. 93.

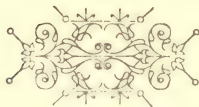
The old schools have done this, although in a more extensive manner. "The indispensable necessity of a long preparation of the European mind" says Count de Maistre¹ "is a fundamental truth, which has utterly escaped our modern talkers. Bacon himself has herein been deceived, as have others, far inferior to him It must be admitted, that this celebrated man seems to have ignored the preparations, which are necessary, in order that science may not become a great evil. Teach the young people physics and chemistry, before you have solidified them in religion and morality, send to a barbarous nation academicians before you have sent them missionaries, and you will see the result." Sensualism and materialism are the necessary consequences of a one-sided natural-scientific education. For this very reason we find *these views at the very beginning of the history of human thought*; we find them with Thales and Anaximenes, Leucippus and Democritus, as St. Thomas remarks, when the intellectual sciences had not as yet been perfected; and when these again decayed, sensualism and materialism returned. They are the fruit of a mind engaged exclusively in the exterior world; they confound *physics* with *metaphy-*

¹ Abendstunden von St. Petersburg, German by M. Lieber, II., (Frankfurt 1825) p. 225,

172 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

sics, and since the latter is the foundation of ethics, this branch of philosophy also must fall with metaphysics. We should be thankful to the old schools for not permitting the scientist to adhere to the merely exterior world, as the one-sided microscopic and micrologic natural-scientist does in his isolated branch, and for opening up a wider horizon for research.

Thus we are obliged to see in the method of the *Christian schools* the guiding hand of Providence and gratefully to admire it. They pondered over nature, but in the light of the intellect. The most ancient documents of the people of revelation breathe a deep love for nature, but universal nature is only the footstool of the divinity, and not itself a god, before which man lies prostrate in adoration.



LETTER IX.

Theology and the Natural Sciences.

(Concluded.)

Not only science, my young friend, but *Scripture itself* directs the Christian teacher to the study of nature. "It is a characteristic mark of the nature-poetry of the Hebrews, that, being a reflex of monotheism, it grasps the whole of the universe in its unity; the whole world is the work of God, and for this reason the poetic thought is grand and solemn; but, contrasted with Indian poetry, because of the thought of the one, personal God, it is always temperate and modest." "In the single 104th psalm a picture of the whole world is presented."¹ Therefore we find the meditation on nature in the most ancient Fathers, and in some of them so originally and so feelingly, especially in St. Basil, that A. v. Humboldt "had a great liking for him on this account."² He says: "There are expressed in this simple delineation of landscape and of forest-life, sentiments, which are

¹ A. v. Humboldt, *Kosmos* II., (Stuttgart and Tuebingen 1847) p. 27.

² *l. c.* p. 27.

more intensely united with those of modern times, than anything which has passed down to us from Greek or Roman antiquity.”¹ When St. Basil in his *Hexaëmeron* pictures the ever-pleasant nights of Asia Minor, the stars, “these eternal blossoms of the heavens” elevate his mind from the visible to the invisible.² Likewise St. Clement of Rome³ demonstrates, by the aspect of creation, “how peacefully clement God is toward universal creation.” The ‘Letter to Diognetus’ lauds the Divine Logos as the artist and architect of the universe, by Whom God created the heavens and inclosed the oceans in their bounds, Whose laws all the elements must obey.⁴ Theophilus speaks of the Pleiades and of Orion and Arcturus and of the “whole galaxy of the remaining constellations, which are named by God’s wonderful wisdom.”⁵ Minucius Felix describes the majestic order apparent in the course of the heavenly bodies, the seasons, the artistic formation of the limbs of animals, the noble beauty of the human body, all visible testimonies to the wise and good Creator and Ruler of the

¹ Basil, Ep. 14, 2.

² In hexaëm. hom. VI., 1; cf. hom. IV., 6.

³ 1 Corinth. ch. 19; cf. c. 20 et 33.

⁴ Ch. 7, 2.

⁵ Ad Autolyc. I., 6.

universe.¹ The deep natural sentiment of St. Augustine, mingled with sorrow and joy, is especially seen in the sentence, which moved Petrarch to tears.² In recent years the former bishop of Perugia, now Leo XIII., has emphasized the importance of the natural sciences for Christian knowledge. He says: "If the universe is a book, on every page of which is written the name and wisdom of God, it follows, that he will be more inflamed with the love of God and zealous for His interests, who has the oftener and the more seriously read in this book. If it be sufficient to have two eyes, in order to see that the starry heavens tell us of the glory of their Creator; if it be sufficient to have ears, to hear that one day tells the next words of praise, how much more will not the power and wisdom of God be visible to him who lifts up on high an investigating eye, or searches the depths of the earth, who views the brilliant stars and examines the atom, who reviews the plants and the grasses, that manifest to him how everything has been ordained according to measure and weight by the Great Spirit. Is it possible then to think, that the Church is hostile or even indifferent to researches

¹ Octav. c. 16-20; cf. c. 2.

² Conf. X., 8.

and investigations which bear such fruit? Man also makes use of his rights as master of nature, by penetrating into its bowels, by gathering its dormant powers, and applying them to his own and his neighbor's benefit. How beautiful and majestic is man, when, courting the deadly streak of lightning, he causes it to fall harmless before his feet; when calling the electric spark, and sending it as his messenger over the illimitable ocean or over steep mountains and vast plains! How great does not man appear, when commanding steam to give him wings to carry him with lightning speed over land and water! How powerful, when by his ingenious inventions he calls into existence these powers of nature and fetters them and ascribes to them direction and rule, and thus, we may almost say, imparts reason to lifeless matter, making it capable of performing for him the most difficult labor. Is there not in man, so to say, a spark of the Creator, when he creates light to dispel darkness?"

It has been said, that the ancient monks and hermits *hated nature*. This assertion is unwarranted. Neither the Fathers of the Desert in the valley of the Nile, around Sinai and in Hauran, nor the brothers inhabiting the woods of Germany and Gaul deserve

this reproach; what induced them to avoid the intercourse with their fellow-men was not antipathy, but rather a *passionate love for nature*. Among the motives, with which the eulogists of monastic life, such as Sts. Basil, Jerome,¹ the two Gregories, advocate it, and, with St. Athanasius, St. Chrysostom and Eucherius defend it, the loveliness of the secluded spots forms not the least. St. Ambrose² speaks of the islands of the Mediterranean, peopled by the cells of the hermits, as a “string of pearls, which God has cast across the sea,” and gives us a vivid description of the chanting of hymns, intermingled with the musical sound of the waves beating and breaking over the beach. Eucherius depicts the isle of Lerins as “full of bubbling springs, brilliant with flowers and perfumed by lovely odors.”³ F. Ozanam has shown in the poetry of the Franciscans, how fervent they were in the meditation of nature’s beauties,⁴ and the chapter “On the Monks and Nature” of Montalembert’s ‘Monks of the West’ has been relished by every reader. Although not everything related there is historically true, but some of it only legendary, this itself would

¹ Hieron Ep. XLVI. Ad Marcell.; Ep. XIV. Ad Heliod.

² Hexaëm. 1, III., c. 5.

³ Eucherius, De laud. erem. ad Hilar. Lirin. c. 42.

⁴ Les poètes franciscains en Italie au 13. siècle, Paris 1852.

go to prove what deep and sensitive feeling for nature was entertained in those quiet cells, which made of the densest wilderness a "valley of light" a "paradise," a "gate of heaven," a "valley of the blessed," a "valley of heaven."

St. Thomas Aquinas also realized the importance of meditation on nature.¹ The meditation on the creatures, he says, is very suitable to teach faith and to root out heresy; for we see God's wisdom and power the more we ponder over His works, and the love of God is inflamed by viewing the beauty of things created, because everything beautiful that appears scattered or isolated in creation, has gone forth from God, the fount of all beauty. And by taking cognizance of created things we become more and more like to Him, Who knows Himself and all without Himself. Likewise, by a correct knowledge of nature we are preserved from paganism and everything that smacks of it, as astrology, fatalism, magic and superstition; by knowing nature man is enabled to realize his own position in the universe.

The love with which St. Francis of Assisi called upon the sun, moon, stars, wind, air, clouds and the other creatures, to praise God, which according to the legend, induced an Anthony to preach to the fishes, and an Egidio

¹ Contra gent. II., 2 sq.

to embrace trees and rocks, because they were the creatures of God, was alive in the Mystics of the other orders, in St. Bernard, Hugh and Richard of St. Victor, Tauler, Suso, etc., as also in the popular preachers. Endeavoring to find in nature the symbols of their ideas, and to elevate the sensible into an image of the supersensible, they, in a certain sense, transfigured nature itself. The fondness of the cloisters of the Middle Ages for beauty of landscape, is too well known to be again referred to; but it must also be remembered, that these monks, by their indefatigable diligence, have given to those swampy river-bottoms and wooded hills their present state, and thereby *first really given them their beauty*. St. Bonaventure bids the nightingale announce the mysteries of the Lord, in the following words:

Philomela, praevia temporis amoeni,
Quae recessum nuntias imbris atque
coeni,

Dum mulcescis animos tuo cantu leni,
Ave prudentissima, ad me, quaeso, veni!

St. Bernard¹ wishes to teach us how to learn

¹ Ep. 106 ad Henric. Murdach: Experto crede: aliquid amplius invenies in silvis, quam in libris. Ligna et lapides docebunt te, quod a magistris audire non possis. An non putas posse te sugere mel de petra, oleumque de saxo durissimo? An non montes stillant dulcedinem et colles fluunt lac et mel, et valles abundant frumento? Multis occurrentibus mihi dicendis tibi, vix me teneo.

180 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

from the earth and from the trees, and from grain and flowers and grass and woods, more than from books, and to imbibe from stones and trees, what no teacher is able to impart to us. According to Hugh of St. Victor "the whole visible world is like to a book, written by the hand of the Lord; by God's omnipotence it was created, and every creature is a mark which, by God's ordination, is to proclaim His wisdom; sensual man sees only the external, but he understands not the meaning."¹ Ivo of Chartres and Gerhoch of Reichersperg express themselves in like manner. Berthold of Ratisbon beholds in the turtledove the picture of a pious Christian, in the noble eagle Christ Himself, in the wily cat the heretic, in the luminous sun the Virgin, and in the spotted moon, Mary Magdalen. Denis the Carthusian has eloquently described the beauty of the world as a copy of the beauty of God.² In 'Physiologus' the preacher can find many examples of the manner in which the manifold formation and modes of life in the animal kingdom can be used to depict virtue and vice.³ In Dante⁴

¹ De sacram. Christ. fid. I., 1 sq.

² De venust. mundi et pulchr. Dei. Operum minorum, tom. II., p. 176-186.

³ Aphorismen, by Hettinger, p. 216. — V. Carus, Geschichte der Zoologie, Munich, 1872, p. 108.

⁴ R. de Visiani, Accenni alle scienze botaniche nella divina commedia, in the pamphlet Dante e il suo secolo, Firenze 1865, p. 519 sq.

we find the animal and vegetable kingdoms exuberantly used as symbols of spiritual things. Who does not know his beautiful description of the immortal soul:

Know ye not
That we are worms, yet made at last
to form
The winged insect, imp'd with angel
plumes
That to heaven's justice unobstructed
soars ? ¹

Why adduce the example of the great Fathers and theologians, since the *Church herself* has chosen and blessed the phenomena of day and night and the elements as symbols of the higher spiritual life? It may suffice to point to the blessing of *water, oil, candles* and the like. The crowing of the cock² announcing the dawn, the morning star preceding the rise of the sun,³ the light of the sun,⁴ the noon-day heat,⁵ the evening sun,⁶ the dark-

¹ Purg. X., 112 sq.

² Praeco diei jam sonat
Ales diei nuntius
Lucem propinquam praecinit.

³ Hoc excitatus lucifer
Solvit polum caligine . . .
Ortus refulget lucifer
Praeitque solem nuntius.

⁴ Jubarque solis evocat.

⁵ Splendore mane illuminas
Et ignibus meridiem.

⁶ Largire lumen vespere.

182 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

ness of night¹ the aurora,² are symbols of spiritual things. In the hymns at Vespers we meditate on the work of the six days; the creation of the plants, of light, of the animals, awaken in the prayerful mind the thought of God, of the Almighty Creator, Giver of light and life.³

The firmament, the luminous sun, the twinkling stars, the roaring ocean, the sweet-smelling flower, become pictures of grand holy thoughts. But especially in the *cycle of feasts* of the ecclesiastical year, the succession of sea-

¹ Aufer tenebras mentium
Nox et tenebrae et nubila,
Confusa mundi et turbida,
Lux intrat, albescit polus:
Christus venit: discedite.

² Lux ecce surgit aurea,
Pallens facessat caecitas,
Quae nosmet in praeceps diu
Errore traxit devio.

Aurora jam spargit polum,
Terris dies illabitur,
Lucis resultat spiculum:
Discedat omne lubricum.

³ Coeli Deus sanctissime,
Qui lucidas mundi plagas
Candore pingis igneo,
Augens decoro lumine
.

Expelle noctem cordium
Absterge sordes mentium,
Resolve culpae vinculum,
Everte moles criminum.

sons in the life of nature, with its ever-changing vicissitudes and forms, becomes a deeply significant symbol of the spiritual life. The four great solemn periods of the ecclesiastical year — Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, and All Saints with All Souls, are intimately connected with the four seasons; the condition of the life of nature influences our religious festivities. Assuredly, nature is the companion of man, his nursing mother, a book, written by the hand of God, a work, which bears upon itself the imprint of Him, Who created it. Assuredly, nature also was included in the curse, in consequence of man's sin it sighs and awaits the time, when it also will be redeemed with the redeemed children of God.¹ The ecclesiastical year begins with the days, when the sun stands at his lowest, when his rays have ceased to bring us warmth, when the nights are long, and the days often without cheerful light. Nature is benumbed, and, as it were, dead. It is an image of mankind; without light, dead and miserable it awaits the rise of the new sun of life. *Christmas* is at hand:

En clara vox redarguit
Obscura quaeque personans,
Procul fugentur somnia,
Ab alto Jesus promicat.

.

¹ Rom. 8, 20 sq.

184 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Mens jam resurgat torpida,
Non amplius jacens humi;
Sidus refulget jam novum,
Ut tollat omne noxium.¹

The awakening of nature in Spring is made to serve as a picture of conversion during *Lent*:

Dies venit, dies tua
In qua reflorent omnia:
Laetemur et nos in viam
Tua reducti dextera.²

After suffering and sorrow we rejoice with the Risen One at *Easter*:

Aurora coelum purpurat,
Aether resultat laudibus,
Mundus triumphans jubilat,
Horrens avernus infremit.
Rex ille dum fortissimus
De mortis inferni specu
Patrum senatum liberum
Educit ad vitae jubar.³

Already the rays of the sun are hotter, his golden, life-giving light now shines longer over the meadows, helping along all buds toward ripeness, and maturing the mellow fruit of field and orchard, of trees and shrubs, a symbol of the working of the Holy Ghost, Whose gifts we implore at *Pentecost*:

¹ Hymn. ad Laud. Adventus.

² Hymn. ad Laud. Dom. Quadr.

³ Hym. Laud. T. P.

Beata nobis gaudia
Anni reduxit orbita,
Cum Spiritus Paraclitus
Illapsus est Apostolis.

Ignis vibrante lumine
Linguae figuram detulit,
Verbis ut essent proflui
Et charitate fervidi.

.....
Te nunc, Deus Piissime
Vultu precamur cernuo,
Illapsa nobis coelitus
Largire dona Spiritus.¹

And now come the days of the *harvest*. The blossoms have long ago been blithed, leaf after leaf the trees lose their foliage, a cold dew covers fields and woods, sultry clouds hover in the skies above us, a breath of mortality hangs over nature. Then the Church celebrates *All Saints* and *All Souls*. Then she implores of all the saints, that those also of her children, who still wander over the earth, be taken as good fruit into the garnering place of the heavenly Father:

Auferte gentem perfidam
Credientium de finibus,
Ut unus omnes unicum
Ovile nos pastor regat.²

¹ Hymn. ad Laud. in Dom. Pent.

² Hymn. ad V. Omn. Sanct.

The way to life passes through the portals of *death* and *judgment*. And therefore the Church remembers also her dead. She steps before the tribunal of God with them and sighs:

Dies irae, dies illa
Solvat saeculum in favilla,
Teste David cum Sibylla.

.
Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Cum vix justus sit securus.

Rex tremendae majestatis,
Qui salvandos salvas gratis,
Salva me, fons pietatis.

Recordare, Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuae viae,
Ne me perdas illa die.

Quaerens me sedisti lassus,
Redemisti crucem passus,
Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Thus the cycle of feasts of the ecclesiastical year becomes the *calendar* of the *new supernatural world*.

Moreover, this life of nature, as we have seen it adapted in word and verse, asserts its typical and symbolical signification also in the *images* and *figures* employed by the Church. We find *lambs* and *doves* in the pictures in the

catacombs as symbols of Christ and of the Holy Ghost, as also of the Christian souls; we likewise find the legendary *phenix* as a symbol of immortality. The representation of a *fish*, as a symbol of Christ and the faithful, is very ancient.¹ The *lion* signifies Christ, the *peacock* and *cock* give expression to the idea of the resurrection. *Deer*, that satisfy their thirst at a fountain, indicate the waters of salvation; the *palm* as an emblem of victory, is well known, as also the *olive-twigg* in the mouth of a dove, signifying eternal peace. *Trees* and *meadows*, full of flowers, represent heavenly paradise. The following period, which decorated the apse of the basilicas with mosaics, has clung to this symbolism; how impressive are the grand pictures in Sts. Cosmas and Damian at Rome, where the apostles, as lambs, look so longingly at Christ, the Lamb of God; how very touching are the mosaics in St. John Lateran, which represent the Jordan, into which the four rivers of Paradise flow! Children are at play among the flowers, and birds are visible on the bank, lambs and deer drink from its waters.

These remarks may suffice to make you understand the thoughts of the Church, which

¹ Tertull., De Bapt., c. 1: Nos pisciculi secundum nostrum J. Chr. in aqua nascimur, nec aliter quam in aqua permanendo salvi sumus. — vide F. X. Kraus, Gesch. der christ. Kunst I. (Freiburg 1896) p. 91-133.

188 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

everywhere sees a great harmony between nature and grace, between the mortal and the immortal. Her wish is, that all mutable things should become a likeness of the immutable, all visible things a reflex of the invisible. Goethe, the worldling, in one of his works, takes a simile from chemistry to represent sinful relations; for the child of God, nature, blessed and consecrated by the Church, in fact, all created things, become a ladder, on which to ascend to the Uncreated and Eternal.



LETTER X.

Art Studies.

Theology, my young friend imparts to us the knowledge of God. God, as Plato had already realized, is the absolute truth, the absolute good; but beauty is an immanent factor of the true and good,¹ and therefore God is beautiful; He is absolute beauty.² The contemplation of the limitable and changeable good leads us, therefore, to God, the primal good. The reflex of truth in our mind directs us to Him, Who is the sun of spirits, the fountain-head of truth;³ the beautiful in creation, in nature, and in art, is but a copy of that immutable beauty, which is in God, and is God Himself.⁴

“The beauty of the creature,” says St. Thomas Aquinas, “is nothing else than a participation of the divine beauty by created beings.”⁵ “True,” he continues, “beauty and

¹ Phileb. (2, 64). Sympos. (3, 291), Lys. (2, 216).

² Καλὸν αὐτὸ καθ' αὐτὸ. Sympos. (3, 211), Phaed. (1, 73).

³ Plato, De republ. VII., (3, 533).

⁴ Plato, Symp. (3, 211).

⁵ In libr. b. Dionys. de div. nom. c. 4, lect. 5: Pulchritudo creaturae nihil est aliud quam similitudo divinae pulchritudinis in rebus participata.

goodness is one and the same in itself; they differ only ideally. The essential characteristic of the good is to satisfy our longing; and of the beautiful, to refresh our sight; and of the true, to denote a relation to the intellect."¹

The greatest beauty, God, is invisible to the sensible eye, and only the blessed see Him as He is; but although visible only imperfectly, and, as it were, "in a mirror," divine beauty meets the eyes of mortals in creation, in the natural and supernatural world. "The most beautiful thing," says Thales, the father of Greek philosophy, "is the world, because it is a work of God's own art."² And the poet says:

Still quiring as in ancient time
With brother spheres in rival song,
The sun with thunder-march sublime
Moves his predestin'd course along.
Angels are strengthened by his sight
Though fathom him no angel may;
Resplendent are the orbs of light,
As on creation's primal day.

¹ Summa I., q. 5, art. 4, ad 1, — I. II., q. 27, a. 1, ad 3: Pulchrum est idem bono, sola ratione differens pulchrum addit supra bonum quemdam ordinem ad vim cognoscitivam, ita quod bonum dicatur id, quod simpliciter complacet appetitui, pulchrum autem dicatur id, cujus ipsa apprehensio placet.

² Diogenes Laert., Vit. philos. I., 1.

And lightly spins earth's gorgeous
sphere.

Swifter than thought its rapid flight;
Alternates Eden-brightness clear,
With solemn, dread-inspiring night;
The foaming waves, with murmurs
hoarse,

Against the rock's deep base are hurl'd;
And in the sphere's eternal course
Are rocks and ocean swiftly whirl'd.

And rival tempests rush amain
From sea to land, from land to sea,
And raging form a wondrous chain
Of deep-mysterious agency;
Full in the thunder's fierce career,
Flaming the swift destructions play;
But, Lord, Thy messengers revere
The mild procession of Thy day.

Angels are strengthened by Thy sight
Though fathom Thee no angel may;
Thy works still shine with splendor
bright

, As on creation's primal day.¹

This is the world of nature; but there is still another, a higher one: the world of grace and glory. Another poet has tried to depict it also:

¹ Goethe, *Faust*, prol. transl. by Anna Swanwick.

192 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

There is in heav'n a light whose goodly
shine
Makes the Creator visible to all
Created, that in seeing him alone
Have peace; and in a circle spreads so
far,
That the circumf'rence were too loose a
zone
To girdle in the sun. All is one beam,
Reflected from the summit of the first,
That moves, which being hence and
vigor takes,
And as some cliff, that from the bottom
eyes
Its image mirror'd in the crystal flood,
As if t' admire its brave appareling
Of verdure and of flowers; so round
about,
Eyeing the light, on more than million
thrones,
Stood, eminent, whatever from our earth
Has to the skies return'd.

.
In fashion, as a snow-white rose, lay then
Before my view the saintly multitude,
Which in his own blood Christ espous'd.

Meanwhile
The other host, that soar aloft to gaze
And celebrate his glory, whom they
love,

Hover'd around; and, like a troop of
bees,

Amid the vernal sweets alighting now,
Now, clustering, where their fragrant
labor glows,

Flew downward to the mighty flow'r,
or rose

From the redundant petals, streaming
back

Unto the steadfast dwelling of their joy.
Faces had they of flame, and wings of
gold;

The rest was whiter than the driven
snow,

And as they flitted down into the flower,
From range to range, fanning their
plumy loins,

Whisper'd the peace and ardor, which
they won

From that soft winnowing.

Ö grace! unenvying of thy boon! that
gav'st

Boldness to fix so earnestly my ken
On th' everlasting splendor, that I
look'd,

While sight was unconsum'd, and, in
that depth,

Saw in one volume, clasp'd of love,
whate'er

The universe unfolds.¹

¹ Dante, Parad. XXX., 100 sq.; XXX., 1 sq.; XXXIII., 77, sq.

Thus, according to St. Augustine,¹ all beauty in created beings is derived from that beauty which is above the soul, and therefore creation leads us, by its beauty, to God. "With whose beauty if they (the pagans), being delighted, took them to be God: let them know how much the Lord of them is more beautiful than they; for the first author of beauty made all those things."² And therefore St. Augustine exclaims: "Late have I loved Thee, O beauty, ever ancient and ever new, late have I loved Thee! The beautiful, that Thou didst create, after that I ran, and it kept me far from Thee. And still it would not exist, were it not for Thee."³ With categorical certainty Winckelmann says: "The greatest beauty is in God, and the notion of human beauty becomes perfect, the more it can be imagined as corresponding to the highest Being, which is discerned from matter by the notion of unity and indivisibility."⁴

And now we understand the essence of art. It has no other office than to represent the ideas, as they are originally in God, and visibly manifest in creation; as the soul is ap-

¹ Conf. X., 34: *Pulchra trajecta per animas in manus artificiosas ab illa pulchritudine veniunt, quae supra animas est.*

² Wisdom 13, 3.

³ Conf. X., 27.

⁴ *Geschichte der Kunst des Alterthums*, Vienna 1776, p. 260.

parent in the countenance and illumines the human form, thus also in the work of art the rays of the ideal pierce through the outer shape and give to it that beauty, which delights the eye of the observer.¹

Thus every work of art includes a twofold element: the soul, and its embodiment; the former is constituted by the idea; the latter enables this idea to become the object of man's contemplation; therefore the artist works with hand and *mind*.² He elevates himself above the sensible, and still remains in the sphere of the sensible, by endowing the supersensible with a sensible form; he is, therefore, as Goethe once expressed it, "the slave and master of nature." He is the slave of nature, for the artist should imitate nature,³ seek in it the shapes and forms, that will most adequately give expression to his ideals; he must not however imitate it as it commonly is, he must not imitate empiric nature, but he must try to view nature⁴ in its primal forms, as it originally was, as it should be. Thus did Phidias create his Jupiter, not according

¹ Arist., *Top.* VI., 7; Plato, *Hipp. maj.* (3, 298); Thomas, *Sum. I.*, q: 5, a. 4 ad 1.

² Philostratus, *Vita Apoll.* II., 22.

³ Arist. *Poetic.* XV., c. 26.

⁴ Not even a portrait-painting is a simple imitation; the painter will try to put the soul into his picture. Hence the difference between a portrait and a photograph.

to a visible model, but such as he would be, if we were able to see him with our own eyes.¹ No man is perfectly beautiful, no man perfectly good; therefore the artist must strive after the ideal man.² Thus Raphael speaks of an archetype of beauty, residing in his mind, to which he strives to give a moral existence by means of his art.³ Indeed, the most beautiful of nature's products has hardly one moment of absolute perfection; and outside of this moment it is only on its way to perfection, or it is already decaying.⁴

But nature renders it imperfect ever,
 Resembling thus the artist in her work,
 Whose faltering hand is faithless to
 his skill.⁵

Therefore art, according to a deeply significant word of Dante is "second in descent from God,"⁶ Who created the greatest master-

¹ Cicero, *Orat.* II., 2: *Nec vero ille artifex (Phidias), cum faceret Jovis formam aut Minervae, contemplabatur aliquem, e quo similitudinem duceret, sed ipsius in mente insidebat species pulchritudinis eximia quaedam, quam intuens in eaque defixus ad illius similitudinem artem et manum dirigebat.*

² Plotinus, *Ennead.* V., 8, n. 1.

³ *Raccolta di lettere sulla pittura, scultura et architettura*, I., (Roma 1754) p. 80: "Io mi servo di certa idea, che mi viene alla mente."

⁴ Plotinus, l. c. 4, 10.

⁵ Dante, *Parad.* XIII., 71 sq.

⁶ Hell, XI., 109.

piece of art, this world, namely, according to the model He bore in His mind. God is the first of artists. In as far as man imitates God's creative hand, he elevates himself to a likeness of God. "Who is a more artful worker, than she (wisdom=God)? Her have I loved and have sought her out from my youth, and have desired to take her for my spouse, and I became a lover of her beauty."¹ In this "divine art"² created things are embodied in a higher sense, than in their merely empiric existence; for they are certainly true, good and beautiful only in as far as they are representations of the divine ideas.³ Therefore nature remains the fountain-head, from which every artist draws his inspirations, by which art can always be fertilized.⁴

¹ Wisdom 8, 6. 2.

² August., In Joan. tr. 1, 1, n. 17. Albert. M., Summ. II., Tract. 11, q. 47, ad 1: Ars. est factivum principium cum ratione. Talis enim intellectus ex rationibus, quae in ipso sunt et speciebus, quae idealiter sunt in ipso, omnibus, quae sunt vel fiunt, speciem et numerum et ordinem dat existendi, sicut artifex omnibus, quae sunt in artificiatio, ex speciebus et rationibus artis speciem et numerum existendi et ordinem dat et influit. Tale autem principium non est nisi per artem et notitiam, et hoc attribuitur Filio Filius est enim ars et notitia et Verbum Patris (as the hypostatic expression of the divine ideas and as the causa exemplaris creaturae.)

³ August., Conf. XIII., 3, 5. — Thomas, De ver. q. 4, a. 4.

⁴ Cicero, De oratore III., 51: Ars cum a natura profecta sit, nisi natura moveat ac delectet, nihil sane egisse videatur. — Horat. De arte poet. ad Pison. v. 317 sq. :

Respicere exemplar vitae morumque jubebo
Doctum imitatorem et veras hinc ducere voces.

— A monstrosity in art denotes its decline,

Philosophy to an attentive ear,
Clearly points out, not in one part
alone,

How imitative nature takes her course
From the celestial mind and from its
art;

And where her laws the Stagirite unfolds,

Not many leaves scann'd o'er, observing
well

Thou shalt discover, that your art on
her

Obsequious follows, as the learner treads
In his instructor's step, so that your art
Deserves the name of second in descent
From God.¹

Why is God beautiful, why is He beauty itself? For the same reason that He is truth, the highest good, because everything that is considered beautiful, or thus called and admired, is united in a supreme measure in Him. Therefore the blessed are in ecstasy, while beholding God.

With fixed heed, suspense and motionless,

Wond'ring I gazed. It may not be,
That one, who looks upon that light,
 can turn

To other object, willingly, his view.²

¹ Dante, *Hell*, XI., 100 sq.

² Parad. XXXIII., 93 sq.

Therefore creation also is beautiful, because it is a copy of the divine original; in it we find, what Aristotle requires as a condition of a beautiful form: measure, order and harmony;¹ and likewise St. Thomas: integrity, harmony, clearness.² Therefore measure, order, pleasing appearance and harmony form the criterion for each work of the fine arts; for "as regards the things made by nature and art, both work in the same manner and with the same means."³ But why does our sight find delight? This also is told us by the Angelic Doctor. "Beauty consists in proportion and clearness. Both are originally in our mind, which has the office to spread light and to ordain things in just proportion."⁴ Therefore beauty is in the things themselves that are called beautiful, but they

¹ Metaph., XIII., 3. — August., *De civit. Dei* XXII., 19, n. 3: *Omnis corporis pulchritudo est partium congruentia cum quadam suavitate coloris.*

² *Summa* I., q. 39, a. 8: *Ad pulchritudinem tria requiruntur. Primo quidem integritas, sive perfectio, quae enim diminuta sunt, hoc ipso turpia sunt, et debita proportio sive consonantia et iterum claritas.* — In libr. b. Dionys. *De div. nom.* c. 4, lect. 5: *Unumquodque dicitur pulchrum, secundum quod habet claritatem sui generis, vel spiritualem vel corporalem, et secundum quod in debita proportionem est constitutum.*

³ *Quaest. disp.* *De verit.* q. 11, a. 1: *In his quae fiunt a natura et arte, eodem modo operatur ars et per eadem media, quibus et natura.*

⁴ *Summ.* II. II., q. 180, a. 2 ad 3.

appear and are recognized as such only by our knowing mind. Goethe once said: "Light is here, and colors surround us; but if we had not light and color in our own eyes, we should not recognize them outside of ourselves."¹

Thus every work of art is an *analogy* of man in his *double nature* of body and soul. Everything, the *sensibly* beautiful in nature and art — a flower, a tree, an animal, — is beautiful only to the contemplating intellect, which, in the visible, recognizes the idea represented.² Herein lies the foundation of that delight, which the artist feels in the conception, and the beholder at the sight of a finished work of art; it is precisely the best part of our human nature that actuates the artist and sympathetically works on the mind of the beholder. "The act of conceiving and finishing," says Mozart, "passes through my mind as a sweet dream. But the capability to hear all of it at once is the most beautiful of all." Dante

¹ Eckermann, *Gespraeche mit Goethe*, III., Magdeburg 1848, p. 146: "I cannot refrain from laughing at the aesthetes, who worry about seeking to define by a few abstract words that ineffable thing which we call "beautiful." The beautiful is a primal phenomenon which, though itself never seen, finds a reflection in the thousand different works of the creative mind, and which is as manifold and various as nature itself."

² August., *De vera relig.*, c. 32: *Et prius quaeram, utrum ideo pulchra sint, quia delectant, an ideo delectent, quia pulchra sunt. Hic mihi sine dubitatione respondebitur, ideo delectare, quia pulchra sunt.*

matter of all that is great and noble, and of all works of genius, still it remains an established fact, that *art* alone defines the limits and the measure, in which genius is to act, and that art alone can preserve genius from excesses and aberrations.”¹

I have just spoken of the great delight which the master takes in his creations; but it is always accompanied by regret. The reason for this is the conviction that he is unable fully to realize his conception.

Yet it is true
That as ofttimes but ill accords the
form
To the design of art, through slugg-
ishness
Of unreplying matter,²
.
My course here bounded, as each ar-
tist's is,
When it doth touch the limit of his
skill.³

Thus, like science, ethics and law, so also art is a truly human activity, born of an urgent inmost longing of our nature, and given to us with it. Art goes hand in hand with the de-

¹ Longinus, *Περὶ ὑψους*, 2. (ed. O. Jahn, Bonnae 1867, p. 11).

² Dante, *Parad.* I., 127 sq.

³ Dante, Parad. XXX., 31 sq.

velopment of mankind, taking part everywhere in its fates and destinies, whether arising to good fortune and progress, or retrograding to its doom. The history of art is an essential factor of the *history of civilization*; and, above all, it is intimately united with *religion*. Art is but a temple, a divine image, a hymn emanating from religion; for it draws its grandest inspirations from religion; religion is the lifegiving soul in the works of art; religion has produced the greatest masterpieces. Hence, *theology, being the science of religion, must not ignore art*; from the beginning it has entered into an alliance with art, in which both have taken and have given; of old, art was the *mother* of religion; during the Christian era it has become the *daughter*.

We ask for a *union* of art with religion; both have come forth from God, the highest ideal, and, although their field is different, both must necessarily lead back to God, if the religion is true, and if art has not departed from its ideal. As all else that serves the truth, serves God, art also must serve Him in representing beauty; for beauty comes from God and leads back to Him.

Every art must, according to an expression of Aristotle, become a *purgation* of the soul.¹ Art must represent the ideal world, the orig-

¹ De arte poet., c. 6, 2.

inal state of things and of man, and thereby elevate us, by the representation of a beautiful, ideal and thoroughly pure life, beyond all that is common, low and sensual; it must, first of all, free us in image and imagination, from the bonds of sin, of death, and of mortality. By art we lift ourselves out of everyday reality, and transplant ourselves into the realm of the ideal, which man possessed in Paradise, when he had not as yet experienced discord in his soul. Thus art becomes a *memento* of Paradise lost, a *prophetess* and an *anticipation* of the life beyond the grave, where there will be "no mourning, no crying, no sorrow."¹

True, pagan art could not redeem, but nevertheless it was an incentive to search for the Redeemer; for the thought of death hovered, like a dark cloud, even over the faces of the eternal gods and beckoned to them to look upward; Socrates, Plato and Cicero himself gave expression to this longing.² Christianity satisfies this longing, having brought redemption to the world, and *thereby also redeemed art*. If art, as you, my young friend, know, is the representation of the ideal under a corporeal covering, of the infinite under the form of the finite, of the

¹ Apoc., 21, 4.

² Plato, Alcibiad. II. (2, 138 sq.); Phaed. (1, 85). De republ. II. (2, 361); Cicero, Tusc. disp. II., 22. vid. p. 31.

heavenly in the dress of the earthly, then there has dawned with Christianity a new epoch for art, the more so, as its teaching about God and the world stands high above that of antiquity.

In Christianity the natural world appears as it was in God's eternal counsel before it was torn asunder by sin, and as it will once be, when transfigured, a new heaven and a new earth. In Christ there has appeared to mankind the divine beauty, the true ideal man; now there has been fulfilled the wish of the Greek, who excogitated as the ideal of man the *καλοκάγαθόν*. Henceforth it will be the pleasant task of art to represent this being to the heart and eye of man, to depict a world spiritually regenerated and mankind freed from error and sin, to excite delight therein, and to inflame love therefore. Thus art becomes in truth a *priestess*, and the sanctuary of religion thereby the *inner sanctuary of art*.

Redemption is continually being applied to all generations, in the *divine worship* of the Church. This worship is the original habitat of art, and all the arts, the plastic as well as the eloquent, architecture, sculpture, painting, music and poetry have spontaneously entered into the service of the Church, because here, as from out of their deepest root, their very heart, they may draw their best and noblest vitality. The Spirit of Christ is the

father of art, the Church with her liturgy is its *mother*. It is no humiliation for art to acknowledge its origin from religion; it is, on the contrary, the very patent of its nobility; and it is no degradation, if art, by way of compensation, allies itself with religion in the attempt to elevate and ennoble the human race, devoting a part, — the best part, of its activity to this noble work.

Ancient and profane art also represent the beautiful, the *sensibly beautiful* — the starry heavens, the roaring ocean, the landscape, the manifold animal kingdom — as also the *humanly beautiful*, in which is visible the soul, liberty, the intensity of feeling, the whole history of the inner man, in a visible form, with its joy and its sorrow. The ancient also tried to represent the *divinely beautiful* in the Olympian Jupiter, the supreme father of the gods and men, with an expression of power, wisdom and clemency,¹ so much so, that the Roman general Paulus Emilius was astonished, and believed that he beheld the very god.² To an-

¹ Quintil. Instit. XII., 10, n. 9: Cujus pulchritudo adjecisse aliquid etiam receptae religioni videtur; adeo majestas operis deum aequavit. Cf. R. O. Mueller, Handbuch der Archaeologie der Kunst, 3d. ed. Breslau, 1848, p. 104 sq.

² Tit. Livius, Hist. rom. XLV., 28: Jovem velut praesentem intuens motus animo est. Itaque haud secus quam si in Capitolio immolaturus esset, sacrificium amplius solito apparari jussit.

cient art and to Hellenism in general, this representation of the religious idea was the highest, and, at the same time, the most suitable; therefore it formed the acme of plastic art,¹ and was viewed with religious reverence. The Christian can no more become enthusiastic over it, for "we can only be enthusiastic over what we believe."²

In place of this there has been opened to Christian art a new world, a supersensible and supernatural kingdom, great, holy and venerable, in the grand forms of Christ and His saints, an inner world, with all those deep and powerful motives, that move and excite the human heart from the deepest realization of guilt and sorrow for it, to the joy and jubilant bliss of blessed souls; above the discord and the calamities of life grace reigns, healing and consoling; pain is transfigured into sacrifice, and from this sacrifice there springs hope, redemption and peace. Here then all of earth's misery is transfigured, all suffering deified; there is indeed the struggle between heavenly and earthly, divine and sinful powers, but victory also is vouchsafed in

¹ "The whole Grecian plastic art is based on religion." A. Feuerbach, *Der nat. Apollo*, 2nd ed. Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1855, p. 250.

² Lotze, *Geschichte der Aesthetik in Deutschland*, Munich, 1868, p. 573. Hence the poverty of our modern art; it is due to the "emptiness of artistic souls."

Him, Who is the conqueror of death and hell. Here nature also is redeemed; by the sacraments and sacramentals the ancient curse is taken away; nature, which had tempted man to sin, and had dragged him into the depths, is converted by these, and is now the guide to the sanctuary. Not every *religious* art, therefore, is Christian art, but *Christian art* is eminently religious art.

Christianity has its actual and historical existence in the Church. Thus *ecclesiastical art becomes the perfection of all art*, and this the more so, because, growing out of the liturgy and faith, *it is a popular art*. And hence we again possess in the Catholic Church, but in an eminently higher sense, what the Greeks had in their art, — an expression of common faith. Hence every one-sided imitation of the antique is unconsoling; it is dead to us, and no history of art, however well it describes the beauty of this ancient art, can bring it back to life again. We think differently, we believe differently. Why look for the living among the dead?

And for this very reason our art, sprung from Christian worship, is *intimately connected with this worship*. And as it was with the Greeks, so it must remain also in our days, if art is not to degenerate. Architecture builds the house for God, sculpture and painting re-

present to us in stone and colors the heavenly forms, poetry and song offer to God, as an act of praise, the best, that man has, — his soul and word. Yes, *liturgy itself is a work of art*; the Spirit of God, as He rules in the Church, has conceived it and given it certain rules to represent the Most Holy. Therefore God Himself in the Old Testament, called art into the service of the sanctuary. “Behold I have called by name Beseleel, the son of Uri and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom and understanding and knowledge in all manner of work, to devise whatsoever may be artificially made of gold and silver and brass, of marble and precious stones and variety of wood. And I have given him for his companion Ooliab And I have put wisdom in the heart of every skilful man, that they may make all things which I have commanded thee.”¹

Hence, my young friend, you will recognize the position of the *history of art* in the system of the theological sciences. Grown out of the liturgy of the Church and of its center, — the Sacrifice of the Mass, — it has, as the liturgy itself, in its main features, strict order and established rules; in this respect it forms a part of *liturgy* and *canon law*. In proportion as ecclesiastical science and Catholic life have

¹ Ex. 31, 2 etc.

prospered, you will find that the clergy have regarded the study of ecclesiastical art as their duty. But, since ecclesiastical law and liturgy have in the course of time been developed and cultivated, the history of art becomes also the object of Christian *archaeology*.¹ Church architecture, with the paraphernalia of worship, as it artistically stood in the beginning of Christianity, is an embodiment of faith, a symbol of hope, a monumental testimony of the inner life of the Church. In this respect, the history of art is a part of *monumental theology*, and is an auxiliary branch of *apology* and *dogmatic theology*; there the latter finds its teachings chiselled in stone and painted on the walls of the catacombs and basilicas.



¹ The writer here takes the word *archaeology* in its widest sense; it is now commonly applied only to the history of art in Christian antiquity. Cf. F. X. Kraus, *On the Notion, Extent and History of Christian Archaeology and the Import of Monumental Studies for Christian Theology*, Freiburg 1879.

LETTER XI.

Art Studies.

(Conclusion.)

From the remarks hitherto made you will readily understand, that Christian art is quite different from ancient art. Nevertheless, both have something in common, especially as regards their *origin*. Both have grown out of religious belief, and religion was the very principle that inspired them. And therefore ancient art, in the time of its greatest splendor, regarded it as its foremost duty to represent the divine; art in the service of the sensual belongs to the period of the decline of Grecian life; and then even art had to bring its products before the public under the mask of divinities. There is, indeed, a great difference perceptible from the very beginning; the ancient humanized God; Christian art, on the contrary, tries to deify man. Homer brought before his people the gods in human form, with strictly limited individuality; the ideal man, in everchanging characteristics, is the object of Christian art. Above all, architecture was developed in the construction

of temples; the profane buildings borrowed their style from that of the temples.

The essential *fundamental forms* of ancient and Christian art are alike, because they are based upon the original and necessary laws of mathematics and constructive technique, and especially because Christianity, in the field of art as well as in social life, has followed pre-existing conditions, which it undertook to leaven with its spirit, and raise to a more exalted position. This fact is also the reason, why the study of ancient art is a necessary preparation for the study of Christian art. The words of Raoul-Rochette: *Un art ne s'improvise pas*, are constantly being confirmed by Christian archaeology. The first Christians were as unable to create a thoroughly new art, as they were to create a new language. But Christianity has essentially modified the ancient forms, and, in the course of centuries, created a new art. The Christian artists had received their education in the schools of the antique, not unlike the Christian apologists and orators, who had been trained in the principles of art, as well as in the laws of metaphysics, logics and aesthetics, by pagan philosophers and rhetoricians; a new art, a new philosophy and a new poetry could come into existence only gradually. Site, structure and decoration of *vaults* and mausoleums —

the Rotunda — remind one of the ancient models; the *baptisteries* likewise are an imitation of the *thermae* of the ancients; the *rotund form* of the Christian churches with their various combinations arose partly from the conversion of pagan temples into Christian churches, — the Pantheon, the Temple of Vesta in Rome —, and partly from the imitation of older structures — the Sancta Sophia in Constantinople, San Vitale in Ravenna, S. Stefano Rotondo in Rome. The same is applicable to the most important and most universal form of Christian church-construction, the *basilica*, whether we imagine it to be an imitation of the old-Roman market or court-house, or whether we think the ancient dwelling to have been its model. The ancient *system of columns* was not only retained in the Christian churches, but they were even taken from the ancient temples and profane buildings, whereby Dorian and Corinthian columns were arranged side by side. As in the ancient edifices, so likewise in the Christian churches the columns were spanned by a straight beam or by an arch, and the intervening spaces harmoniously decorated with various carvings and mouldings etc.; in deference to ancient custom the *ceilings* were likewise interlaid and adorned with mouldings and cassettes, and the *floors* were made up

of many-colored stones, arranged in mosaics. In the great wall-mosaics, the figures still retained the pose, position and gestures, as well as the style of dress inherited from ancient art. Thus the new religion assumed into its service the whole treasure of the form and shapes of antiquity, and, although diverse changes and innovations were admitted in the course of time, the obvious relationship with the ancient was still perceptible. In fact, we must say, that even after a thousand years had passed, and Gothic and Roman cathedrals were rising to the skies, and Christian art was striving to reach the climax of its grandeur, when Christian architecture was endeavoring to free itself from ancient bonds and forms, and to bring forth new and independent creations in every direction, even then we cannot fail to recognize the outlines of the antique architectural construction. The "hatred of art" among the first Christians, of which we formerly heard so much, is as much a "fable convenue" as their "hatred of nature." Thus the Renaissance with its masterpiece, St. Peter's in Rome is only an actual recognition of what antiquity did in the sphere of art, and especially of architecture. It was the technical construction, the artistic system of columns, pillars, pilasters and arches, to which Brunelleschi, Bramante,

Michelangelo returned; they had not the intention to be slavely imitators of antiquity, but they wished intelligently and freely to adapt its elements to the service of Christianity. If Gothic architecture aspired longingly to heaven, the builders of St. Peter's wished to portray heaven itself, as we see in the mosaics of the ancient Christian basilicas; there we see Christ with the apostles, and the twenty-four elders of the Apocalypse, who lay down their crowns before the Saviour giving His blessing. Thus the temple of God becomes the symbol of the "coelestis urbs Jerusalem," a habitation of God among men.¹

In plastic art the representations were originally conformable to the antique in attire and composition; yet you may detect the beginning of a transformation; the eye outshines the figure; gesture and action, though simple, are nevertheless imposing. The bronze-statue of St. Peter in St. Peter's at Rome, which comes to us from the times of Leo I.,² has the characteristics of the antique, but nevertheless it shows imposing earnestness, potent dignity and majesty. We perceive the struggle of a new spirit, showing itself in an indescribable way, in an expression of soul and warmth.

¹ Apoc. 21, 3.

² Some art-critics say it belongs to the 13th century. cf. F. X. Kraus, *Geschichte der christl. Kunst* I., 231, (Freiburg, 1896).

In another respect also Christianity, at its entrance into the world, did not despise antiquity. Lamps and tapers, holy founts and incense were proper to the ancients, as well as solemn processions and hymns. The bishops assumed, as an insignia of their office, the omophorium, the shoulder-scarf of the Roman consuls; bishops and priests arrayed themselves in the white tunic, fastened around the loins, as also in the ancient cloak, which covered the arms. These things, though used by the pagans, were not on that account pagan; therefore St. Gregory the Great wrote very wisely to the abbot Mellitus in England, to Christianize pagan temples, customs and feasts, and not to suppress them violently.¹

Greater than their agreement is the *difference* existing between ancient and Christian art. The object of the ancient art is the *myth*, that of Christian art is *history*; *the life of Christ is no myth*. And the Saviour is surrounded as with a luminous crown, with a group of most

¹ Ep. XI., 76: Fana idolorum destrui in eadem gente minime debeant, sed ipsa, quae in eis sunt idola, destruantur Nam duris mentibus simul omnia abscidere impossibile esse non dubium est, quia is, qui locum summum ascendere nititur, necesse est, ut gradibus vel passibus, non autem saltibus elevetur. Similarly St. Augustine Ep. XLVII., c. 3: Cum in usus communes, non proprios æ privatos, vel in honorem Dei convertuntur (templa, idola, loci), hoc de illis fit, quod de ipsis hominibus, cum ex sacrilegis et impiis in veram religionem mutantur.

noble personages, different as to age, sex and character, but all appear *transfigured*. There is the exalted flight of John, the depth of Paul, the intense zeal of Peter; there you may see great women, Mary, the Mother of God, combining in herself the two most noble ideas, to which womanhood can be elevated, virginity and maternity, with a galaxy of holy women down to the penitent Magdalen. And our eyes are turned back to the past, to the historic life of antiquity; the prophets announce the dawn of salvation, priests offer up the symbolic sacrifices, and the kingdom of Christ is seen typically in the kings of the Old Testament. As around Jesus and Mary are gathered the disciples and apostles of the Lord, so around these is furthermore gathered the Church of the following centuries with her millions of confessors, virgins, martyrs and doctors who have conquered the world, satan and the flesh, and who, like a heavenly army, look down upon us to bring consolation in the darkness of our earthly life. And therefore Christian art is eminently a *popular art*. It represents in picture and color, what lives in the soul of each one of us, from the child to the old man, from the poor to those who sit on thrones; it speaks to all a language which all may understand; for it is born of the life of the people, of *their faith and religion*.

218 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Since the myth is the form of paganism, and paganism the "rankly growing" religion of nations, matured in their natural life, therefore, pagan art is necessarily *national*; one nation stands hostile to and isolated from its neighbor, and, in the light of mythical pagan fancy, the struggles of peoples appear to them as the battles of the gods. The Greek could not understand the Egyptian temples, for the Egyptian religion and customs were an enigma to him; he saw, as Herodotus remarks, in the Egyptian life and habits the exact opposite of his own domestic views. The character of Christianity, on the contrary, is *universality*. The name "Christendom" denotes the communion of views in all points, in faith and morals, in science and culture, in life and aspirations; there is neither "Jew nor Greek," Roman, Slav, or German, all are children of the one Church, all members of one body. Therefore Christian art also is universal; we understand the pictures of the Italian Orcagna in the Campo Santo in Pisa, and of Giotto in S. Maria dell' Arena in Padua, as likewise the pictures of the Germans Schongauer, Memmling, Grüenwald. Dante already gave expression to this thought, when portraying the pilgrim from Croatia honoring reverently the picture of the Lord in Rome:

Like a wight,
Who happy from Croatia wends to see
Our Veronica, and the while t'is shown,
Hangs over it with never-sated gaze,
And, all that he hath heard revolving,
saith

Unto himself in thought: "And didst
thou look

E'en thus, O Jesus, my true Lord and
God?

And was this semblance thine?"¹

Thus in very deed, the Catholic church edifice becomes an art gallery, in which the grandest pictures are exposed to the gaze of the people, who understand them, are edified by them, rejoice over them, and are thereby elevated and ennobled. Here it is not as in our museums, those charnel-houses filled with artistic limbs, which, taken from the place where they belonged, and torn from the organic whole, of which they formed a part, (so much so, that you are liable to find a Venus aside of a Pietà) — do not produce a common effect in us, but at most can serve only the artist or archaeologist as a study. Wm. v. Humboldt advised us to place works of art in our rooms, since their constant presence accustoms the senses to the beautiful, and ennobles them.

¹ Parad. XXXI., 91 sq.

220 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

That is what the Catholic Church has done from the beginning; and in the subterranean oratories of the catacombs themselves, the pictures of a Good Shepherd, a prophet, of the Bl. Virgin look down upon us so mysteriously, so full of majesty and dignity. Thus the Church, helping along devotion, at the same time gave a mighty impulse to art, and with the religious feeling, which she nourished, she likewise developed in the Catholic people a real ideal of beauty. When the Reformation forbade art and demolished its creations as idolatry, it thereby murdered art which formerly pervaded public life, and robbed the people of their plastic ideals. Since man cannot do without art, it returned to the times of paganism, and found an asylum only in the palaces of princes and the dwellings of the rich, where, exiled from its true home, and breathed upon by a worldly spirit, it was frequently prostituted and became an object of sensual perversion.

Ancient art represented the gods in sensible, beautiful form; but nevertheless they are only greater men, more beautiful, stronger than we are and immortal; but in their forms, their feelings and their passions they are similar to the mortal. Christianity frees man from earthly bonds and fetters, and directs his gaze heavenward. Man is not as

with antiquity, a son of god, equal to his god, by nature; his God reigns above the clouds; He is the almighty Creator of heaven and earth and of man himself, from Whom man receives breath and life, and from Whom he expects grace and salvation. *Sursum corda!* the works of Christian art say to us.

And therefore Christian art does not emphasize beautiful form as much as the ancient did. It does not despise it, but physical beauty appears only as a *secondary factor*, in contrast to interior merit, the beauty of the soul. How wonderfully do not the old statues in our Gothic churches please us, how devout, how full of soul is the glance, with which they look down upon us, so much so, that we forget to notice the anatomical and technical blunders! Christian art does not rest satisfied with the architectonic beauty of buildings, or the beauty of human forms which it represents; it fills them with something ideal, and thereby casts over them a higher, superterrestrial beauty. Even the most beautiful form obtains importance in Christian art only in as far as something deeper and soul-like is reflected from it, and a breath of the divine hovers over it. The Hellenic temple is only a fenced-up dwelling of the god, present in the cella in his statue;

the cella, the sanctuary, is small, low, mostly without light, or only open at the top, of simple architectural dimensions; the exterior of the temple, on the contrary, is surrounded with pillars, and ornamented with statues and reliefs. Quite different from this is the Christian temple. It is the *dwelling of God* among men; and being so, it stands isolated from the outside world, it is not a big, airy house of pillars, as with the ancients; the God, Whom we adore, does not reside in a dark cella; He calls upon His people to come to Him; the Christian temple is supposed to receive them within its walls; here, by the hands of the priest, they are to offer up to God the mystical sacrifice, here they are to receive instruction, consolation and grace. Therefore the Christian church is spacious, it rises heavenward, and unseemly from without, its whole beauty is from within.¹ These spacious, high apartments are architectonically arranged, and ornamented with many images.

The ancients as a rule were never in the habit of representing their gods nude, not even in the beginning. Jupiter and Juno, as a rule are clothed, also Apollo, Artemis and even Venus; it was rather a risk Praxiteles ran, when he represented the Cnidian Venus totally nude. In the latter periods of Grecian

¹ Cant. 4, 7.

art, however, the nudity of statues became more frequent, so much so, that some of our modern students of aesthetics claim to find in the representation of the nude the highest ideal and the triumph of art. *Christian art forbids the nude*; and in this respect it is guided not only by motives of respect and morality, but by a desire to lead true art *back to the ideals*, which it had in the remotest antiquity — you may compare the works of a Phidias with those of Praxiteles — but which had been lost in consequence of universal moral corruption. The very covering of the body directs the view of the beholder to the head and face, where the intellect dwells and the soul finds its expression; and the plastic beauty of the body appears with greater distinctness under the beautiful arrangement of the garments. Only he can see in the other parts of the body, which we cover, a beautiful soul, for whom the body of an athlete or an Hercules is the highest subject of plastic art. It is only the inferior part of the soul-life, that is visible in the anatomical construction and muscles of the body.

Let us add, that Christianity refuses to tolerate nudity even in *profane* art.¹ And herein it is perfectly right, even when considered from a purely aesthetic point of view, and the

¹ Rom. 7, 18; 8, 3; 2 Cor. 5, 2.

greatest intellects of antiquity, Plato¹ and Cicero² take sides with Christianity. Art must elevate, must educate, the soul itself must become beautiful, as Socrates once said, at the aspect of beautiful works.³ For, "not for vain-glorious amusement did the gods give us art, but in order to moderate the unruly motions of our soul, and to give it an harmonious toning."⁴ Sensual pleasure, to which art in its present, almost universal decline, is a slave, does not effect this. They, who praise such pictures, are those who prefer a farce, or an operette by Offenbach to one of Shakespeare's tragedies, as E. von Hartmann says. "In order to excuse the representation of nude pictures," says St. Charles Borromeo, "they say that surely Adam and Eve were naked in Paradise before the fall, and therefore we must paint them nude, because they knew no shame. But they who look at them

¹ De republ. I. (2, 352).

² De offic. I., 35: Hanc naturae tam diligentem fabricam imitata est hominum verecundia. Quae enim natura occultavit, eadem omnes qui sana mente sunt, remouent ab oculis ipsique necessitati dant operam, ut quam occultissime pareant Nec vero audiendi sunt Cynici (a quibus) plura in eam sententiam contra verecundiam disputantur Nos autem naturam sequamur et ab omni, quod abhorret ab oculorum auriumque adprobatione fugiamus.

³ Plato, Phaedr. (3, 279).

⁴ Plato, Tim. (3, 47).

in their nakedness, are not Paradisian people, *they can blush* and think evil." In the same letter this saint blames Michelangelo, "whose defects the brush of another had to cover." (Daniel da Volterra and Stefano Pozzi.) Such naked figures are, strictly speaking, repulsive. What are we to think of a naked nymph under our Northern sky, and how really miserable does not such a figure seem to us! We freeze although wrapped in our furs, and that poor thing naked! I cannot tell you how completely disgusted I was, on seeing the colossal statue of Napoleon I. by Canova, in the park of the Brera at Milan. It represents him as a Roman emperor, totally naked, holding in his left hand a scepter and in the right an emblem of victory poised on a globe. The contrast between this figure and the traditional form of the emperor, the small man with the green coat and the three-cornered hat, is really comical. How can that be beautiful which is untrue and unhistorical on its very face! We simply do not understand, why the emperor is undressed, as if he were going to take a bath. Or should we, because it is said that nudity is the highest ideal of art, go to the monuments of Schiller, Schelling and Goethe, and take off their clothes, in order the better to recognize the "harmony between soul and body." Per-

haps it was this repugnance to the nude in the first Christians, which, aside from other reasons, caused them to *intimate* the *martyrdom* of the different saints only; a sword at the feet of St. Agnes, a gridiron beside St. Laurence, tells all, and the tradition observed up to the Middle Ages, which shrank from representing our Lord naked on the cross, had its foundation in the consciousness of the dignity of our Lord.¹

I have dwelt rather at length on the question, whether nudity enhances the beauty of the human body. Since an affirmative answer has been given by so many modern students of aesthetics, and has been, so to say, established as a canon of plastic art it required a lengthy treatment. In fact, I myself, in my younger days, have heard the professor speak of the great importance and preëminence of the nude in plastic art; and when our common sense, and our aesthetic sensibility, and our Christian maxims revolted against such views, we were decried as intellectual narrow-minds, as having no taste for art and

¹ The author is not quite right in this last point. The two oldest representations of Christ on the cross, the one found on the door of the church of S. Sabina in Rome and the other on ivory, in the British Museum, both of the 5th century, represent Christ as nude, girt around the loins with a piece of white linen. Furthermore we find nudities on some pictures in the catacombs, on ancient Christian sarcophagi, etc.

aesthetic culture. But, my young friend, let them talk; from the same professorial chair we were told, and likewise by others, that colorless statues only were artistic, and we were led to look upon painted statues as an infallible sign of their belonging to the period of decline. This we did not believe, and the latest history of art seconds our views.¹ The nude statues of antiquity belong to the time of the *decline* of art, and the decline of morality was its companion. Immorality corrupted art, and corrupt art favored and nourished immorality. The more carnal man is, the more carnal art is.

In Christianity aesthetic pleasure is not the only office of art; it also strives after the elevation and sanctification of the beholder. Christianity represents her pictures sensibly, but she elevates the sensible into the regions of the supersensible; she imitates nature, but lifts nature into the supernatural realms; she takes her motives from creation and her figures from history, but she would have us view them in the light of redemption, and thus she gives them not only an aesthetic, but also a real halo, because the spirit of sanctity breathes over them. Man

¹ Cf. Fr. Kugler, *Kleine Schriften und Studien zur Kunstgeschichte*. I. (Stuttgart 1853) 265 sq. — W. Luebke, *Grundriss der Kunstgeschichte*, 10th ed. I. (Stuttgart 1887) 138.

and the whole of creation is a work of art of God, ruined by sin and humbled by pain and sorrow.

Antiquity sought redemption, but found not the Redeemer. This is Christ, and He alone. Therefore it is the office of Christian art to represent the primitive paradisiac beauty of things, to place before corrupt actual life a mirror of the ideal, a mirror of a better primal existence. On one occasion I saw in the Museo Nazionale in Naples a bust of Plato which deeply moved me and wonderfully held me captive; it seemed to me as if his spirit were lifted on high, as if he were filled with a longing to see the incarnate virtue, in which was to appear the highest ideal of beauty.¹ *It has appeared to us, and we saw His glory, full of grace and truth.*² In Christ God has become incarnate, man has been elevated and drawn into closer union with God, man has been deified. And therefore we find *in Him the principle of Christian art*, through Him it embraces all mankind, universal nature and creation in a transfigured light. He is the absolutely Holy One, the aim and model of all moral striving; and therefore the eternal, unsurpassable ideal of all beauty and beautiful art.

In Christ we see what man is in reality, and

¹ Phaedr. (3, 247); De republ. IX., (2, 592).

² John 1, 14.

what he ought to be; a son of Adam, a son of the dust and of sin, and again, a work of grace and an heir of heaven; transfigured in the picture of Christ, he is to become a son of God. Thus Christianity achieves what antiquity had only surmised; it supplements, perfects and completes what modern humanity possesses, and dissolves the discord which the latter as well as the former was not able to do.

Let us then, my dear Timothy, bring back our thoughts about art and art-studies to God, the archetype and fountain of all beauty on earth. Now you have been convinced, that a theologian can impossibly be indifferent to art; it has been given to man as a companion, since his expulsion from paradise, remaining at his side when he began his sorrowful wandering over the cursed earth. The *theologian ought rather to cultivate art*, which quietly and noiselessly, but nevertheless loudly and mightily, speaks to the soul, which is in truth a bible, not only for the poor, but for all those who look at its works, *a school of aesthetics*, if I may be allowed to use the expression, in which the eyes of the people, of the whole people, have, by the sight of beauty, cultivated humanity's tastes, and refined its sentiments.¹ It was vandalism and sheer fanati-

¹ Gregory the Great, Ep. X., 52: Deum nobis ipsa pictura quasi scriptura ad memoriam Filium Dei reducit, animum nostrum aut de resurrectione laetificat, aut de passione demulcet.

cism that destroyed so many beautiful works of art in the sixteenth century; the Catholic Church had created them and still continues to do so. It would show a lack of true artistic sense and understanding, if we were to judge the worth of church-artistic ornaments by the number of precious stones and the value of precious metals; their beauty also is from within, and consists in the religious conception and tasteful execution, although the material may be ever so common.

If I exhort you to study art, and especially ecclesiastical art, I am far from wishing you to become a mere *dilettante* or art-enthusiast. Just such men, with whom the world superabounds at present, have harmed true, holy art considerably; having learnt a few artistic technicalities and phrases, without deeper knowledge of the subject, and especially, not having studied long and diligently the great artistic creations of their own and foreign countries, and not having even seen them, they not only pass judgment with great confidence, but likewise hesitate not to remove old and better masterpieces, to replace them with their own, inferior preferences. A pretended understanding and love of art, by which so many imagine to acquire a reputation of culture, is the greatest enemy of real art,

The *Roman Catechism*, my young friend, speaks of real art, when it says: "Religious pictures exist, that through them Christians may learn the history of the Old and New Testament, and often have it recalled to their minds, and by the meditation of the divine deeds be inspired to love God and to serve Him. In like manner, pictures are exposed in churches, that we may venerate them, and be induced to imitate the example of those whose images we view."¹ And the Council of Trent² says: "The bishops ought diligently to point out the fact, that pictures or other representations of our redemption are destined to instruct the people, and to foster in them a habit of taking to heart the doctrines of the faith and constantly to be reminded of them; for by them they are not only exhorted to remember gratefully the graces and blessings received from Christ, but are also enabled to see with their own eyes the miracles which God has worked through His Saints, and to contemplate their good example. By these pictures they are reminded to thank God, and to regulate their lives ac-

¹ Pars III., c. 2, n. 24. — Gregorius M., Ep. IX., 105 ad Serenum: Idcirco pictura in ecclesiis exhibetur, ut hi, qui literas nesciunt, saltem in parietibus videndo legant, quae legere in codicibus non valent. Cf. Ep. XI., 13.

² Sess. XXV. Decr. de invoc. et ven. et reliq. Sanctorum et sacris imagin.

according to the example of the saints, and are likewise encouraged to adore God, to love Him, and to lead a life of piety." Furthermore the Fathers of the Council exhort "not to put up images, which could lead the people into heretical opinions, every sensual representation should be avoided, and lustful pictures should not be made." Unusual pictures must not be exposed, not even in exempt churches, without the permission of the bishop.

K. Baehr says: "Although speech may ever so directly excite the mind and occupy the thoughts, still it remains a fact, and no one can change it, that, under certain circumstances and with certain characters, a work of art will make an impression, which speech in nowise can do. The picture of Christ crucified, in the church, which is always before the eyes of the congregation, imprints itself on the mind of youth so deeply, that it can hardly be effaced from it, and consequently produces a greater and more lasting effect than many Good Friday sermons."¹ A picture affects our imagination and makes an impression on it, our imagination then affects the mind, the whole inner man. The strict Calvinist, who has never seen a crucifix, will never, although he may have heard many

¹ Der protest. Gottesdienst, Heidelberg 1850, p. 25.

sermons on Christ crucified, have such an idea of the fact, as a simple Catholic child.

These authorities, to which I could add that of provincial councils, may suffice; as church-music should not evade the judgment nor the superintendence of the clergy; neither should art do so. Alas! this has happened, and still happens, to the great detriment of edification, and surely not for the advancement of true art. In conclusion, I should like to call your attention to another field of ecclesiastical art which has been very sadly neglected, and which is of such importance for the religious education of our people. And this is, *the devotional picture*, many thousands of which are annually distributed among the people. Who does not know that the picture of a saint, as we saw it when children, makes a lasting impression on our minds, that can hardly be effaced? We have long ago forgotten the words of the sermons or of the catechism, but we never forget the impression a picture has made on us when boys. The pagan Greek tried to give his gods fine lineaments; we Christians, what do we do? Is not the representation of our saints often so incorrect, unaesthetic and even ugly, that our enemies could well remark that Catholic devotion does not agree with beauty of representation? Some have tried to counteract this

evil. There are millions of pictures of French make among the people. The representation is often not traditional; the symbolism is often novel and sensual; the angels, among the ancient Christians so dignified, are worldly and insipid, the saints themselves ugly, sentimental, utterly incapable of arousing the spirit of earnest, simple, yet stern Christianity, but rather adapted to lessen the spirit of Catholic devotion, to engender sentimentality instead of a solid, Christian, virtuous life. The execution, the decoration with gold, with many colors, and lace borders, are worthy of the picture itself, superficial and showy, as is the kind of devotion created by such pictures. In the name of good taste, and especially of true piety and of a Christian spirit of prayer, we must decidedly condemn such work, which not seldom is only a means of filthy lucre.

Good artists have already done much to counteract this. The ornamentation with gold and colors should not be done away with altogether, nor do I wish to be considered an advocate of Puritanical rigorism. But we must expel from Christian art ball-figures and salon-saints, as Christ expelled the venders from the temple. Indeed, there is yet much wanting, until the sense and understanding for something better becomes

universal; there is an extensive field of activity open here for bishops and priests. Where true piety dwells, which despises all rubbish, there will soon awake a sense for simple, unartificial and true beauty.

My young friend, let me conclude this letter with the words of Plato: "The sight of eternal beauty is the only thing, that can give life any value. What happy lot of the mortal, to whom it is given to look upon beauty untarnished, in its purity and simplicity, not clothed with flesh and color and with all those charms, which must sooner or later pass away; how happy he who can view face to face, in its only true shape, the divine beauty." ¹



² Sympos. (3, 211).

LETTER XII.

The Seminary.

If you, my young friend, in order to draw your theological knowledge from the fountain-head, would peruse the numerous volumes of the Fathers, you would meet with a curious fact. These great champions of faith against paganism and Judaism, these implacable enemies of heresy, who strenuously opposed all forms and shapes soever, by which it strove to adulterate Christ's work, as an impregnable wall combating them with every weapon that science placed at their command, these grand and powerful orators, these men of astounding sagacity and extensive learning, who erected over the ruins of the fallen Roman empire a new civilization, a new society, a new world, whose virtuous lives cast their rays into the night of a declining world — what can explain to us the mystery of their power, their education, their activity, of their whole being? The spirit of Christianity, you will say. That is correct; but whence did they draw it in its beauty, in its plenitude, how were they wholly permeated by it?

Sts. Athanasius, Basil, Gregory of Nazianzum, Jerome, Augustine answer this question. Among the writings, in which St. Athanasius of Alexandria, (296-373), to whom posterity has given the honorable title of the Great, the "Father of Orthodoxy," with wonderful ingenuity penetrates the depths of the Christian mysteries, there is one, which bears an altogether different stamp. It is his book on the "Life of the holy father Anthony." He had fled to him in the desert, when persecuted by the Arian emperors; here in the desert, under the guidance of this great hermit, far from the noise of the world and of the metropolis, he reached that height in meditation, which steeled his soul, so that he knew not hope nor fear, but only the divine honor due to the *Logos*. Here in the deep solitude of the sterile, dry desert we find the fountains out of which these great men drew their supernatural power, the one in the simplicity of his faith, the other in Christian wisdom and science; the one, to teach his pupils a hatred of the world, the other to teach the faith in the metropolis of Grecian culture.

Go from Alexandria to Athens. The splendor of many hundred years has not as yet vanished; her walls encompass both Christian churches and pagan temples; Christian and pagan young men crowd into the lecture-

halls of her celebrated teachers; among these is also Julian, the future emperor and apostate. Among these we also see two friends, united by the bonds of friendship; they remain undefiled amid the temptations and dangers of the pleasure-seeking city; they know only the way to church and to the school; they surpass all by their knowledge and gift of speech. These two youths are St. Basil the Great (331-379), later on bishop of Cesarea, and St. Gregory of Nazianzum (ca. 325-390/91). His great talents, his knowledge and rhetoric were to serve his faith, which, as St. Basil himself says, he had kept unsullied from his youth; but he does not deem himself capable as yet to take this task upon himself. For this reason he went to Egypt and sought the hermits of the desert; here he awoke as from a deep sleep, as he himself writes to a friend, and then he beheld the gospel in the fulness of its light. Returning to his native country, he became the founder of oriental monasticism, where solitude is interrupted only by manual work and study. From here he wrote to his friend Gregory of Nazianzum, inviting him to flee the world and to taste the sweetness of solitary life. "I have returned to Pontus," he says, "to find a life as I want it; God permitted me to find it." Now follow those beautiful descriptions of nature,

which Alex. von Humboldt admired so much. Gregory came to visit him there; prayer, study and manual labor were the order of the day in this small monastery; scholars from Greece and Asia came to them to receive instruction; and only then, after years of preparation, Basil and Gregory were ordained priests.

Do you not behold in the life of these two great Cappadocians a *model of the life of a good theologian*, of your own life? Your studies have brought you to the great centers of learning; the temptations and distractions of the large city — and were it the holy city of Rome itself, where are they not? — had no attraction for you; science only, taught you by your professors, could command your attention. There may have been a few with you, attending the same lectures, who will perhaps, at some future day, like another Julian the Apostate, wage war against Christianity. By attending said lectures, you are, like those great Fathers, armed with the weapons, with which to overcome the adversaries of faith. Surely, these have not learnt more than you have, nor anything different, nor anything special, and most likely not so much as you have. You have experienced quite early the sophistry of so-called science, and have seen its fallacy, and are therefore

prepared for the attacks of falsehood. One of your teachers may have been a Libanius, to whose words you listened even as attentively perhaps as those two Cappadocian youths did, although he was a stranger to Christianity; what you have learnt from such a one must likewise enter into the service of truth, to the defense of which you have consecrated your life. But, with this *your education is not completed*. St. Chrysostom recollects the time, when he, like the Cappadocians, sat at the feet of Libanius, and he is grateful to him to no small extent, for the fulness and splendor of his own oratorical achievements; and Libanius pointed him out as the fittest of his pupils to propagate the reputation of his school. St. Chrysostom thought of something else, of something higher, than of being an orator. He returned from Athens to his native place and soon came to the conclusion, that he must consecrate his life to the God of the Christians. He was baptized and made a lector in the church. In order to prepare himself the better for his vocation, he wished to go into the desert; only the tears of his mother, the widow Anthusa, kept him back for a time. When the people asked that he be made their bishop, he fled and hid himself in the solitude of the rugged hills near Antioch, where he remained six years, the

last two of which he spent in a cave; there he wrote his admirable book “On the Priesthood.” Here again is a fresh proof, that solitude, and not the market-place nor the noise of public life is the mother of great thoughts; and great thoughts make great orators.

Of St. Augustine, his biographer Possidius relates, that he spent three years with his friends in a secluded spot of Africa, far from worldly business, living only for God in fasting, prayer and good works, and meditating day and night on the law of God.¹ And thus all should do, who wish to prepare themselves for the priesthood.² St. Jerome³ also wishes the priest to undergo a long period of preparation, and he despises the “sacerdotes momentaneos.”

I shall now cease placing before you the examples of the great men of former times, who prepared themselves for the priesthood in solitude, and there only. Sts. Jerome, Ephrem, Epiphanius and many others, holy bishops and priests have done likewise, and the Church has finally established it as a law, that her priests be educated in solitude.

What sort of solitude does the Church re-

¹ Vita S. August c. 2 sq.

² l. c. c. 5; cf. c. 11.

³ Ep. LXIX., Ad Ocean. c. 4.

quire of her future priests? Solitude is, first of all, a purely negative notion; it alone cannot educate the young man for the priesthood. The misanthropist also lives alone, and separates himself willingly from the society of his fellow-men. St. Basil already was aware of the dangers of solitude; he surely had the opportunity to learn this fact from at least a few of the hermits in the desert. According to him solitude easily leads to self-love and self-sufficiency; it does not practise patience, nor afford opportunities to be charitable to one's neighbor.¹

It is not the separation from the world that makes us better men; the high walls that surround us and allow admittance to no one, will not heal our sick soul. It is just in solitude that the imagination reäwakens, bringing before the mind pictures of the world, the more tempting, because they are pictures of fancy, which the imagination decorates in most beautiful colors. These pictures followed even the penitent Jerome into the very solitude of the desert of Chalkis, whose charms he knew so well to portray to his friend Heliodorus.² "How often," he laments, "have not the pleasures of Rome dazzled my eyes, even in this dreary,

¹ Reg. fus. tract., interrog. 7.

² Ep. XIV., Ad Heliod.

sand-covered desert! A hairshirt encompassed my limbs; I sat alone, and my soul was full of bitterness; my skin was blackened like that of an Ethiopian; daily I wept and moaned. My body lay on the bare earth, when sleep overcame my will. And yet, I, who for fear of hell, had exiled myself in this prison, the haunt of serpents and tigers, I saw myself in my imagination placed in the company of dancing Roman matrons. My face was pale with fasting, and my body burned with desires. In this cold body, in this deadened flesh, the fire of passion was aglow I dreaded my own cell, for it appeared to know my thoughts. Thereupon I went further into the desert, to hide myself.”¹ Work, the study of the Hebrew language, which seemed so difficult and barbarous, was now his shield against the allurements of his imagination.² “*In solitudine cito subrepat superbia,*” he said, in order to admonish us, how necessary it is to have a spiritual director.” “*Ama scientiam Scripturarum,*” he adds, “*et carnis vitia non amabis*” “*Facito aliquid operis, ut semper diabolus occupatum te inveniat.*”³

¹ Ep. XXII., Ad Eustoch. c. 7.

² Ep. CXXV., Ad Rustic c. 9 sq.

³ “*Per haec omnia tendit illa oratio,*” he concludes his admonition, “*ut doceam te, non tuo arbitrio dimittendum, sed vivere debere in monasterio sub unius disciplina Patris*

We should *insert into solitude a holy, a sanctifying ingredient.*

Thus arose the educational institutions for priests; what St. Augustine had begun, was continued by St. Gregory the Great, Bishop Burchard of Wuerzburg, Chrodegang of Metz, Gerard Groote of Deventer and Bartholomew Holzhauser; was enjoined by many synods and by the Council of Trent, was defined as the necessary condition of a good priestly education. What the Council of Trent established as a law for the universal Church, had long before been in practice. "A cleric," says St. Augustine, "who does not wish to accommodate himself to this life in common with others, may cite against me a hundred councils, and go wherever he pleases to bring charges against me; nevertheless he may rest assured, that I will scratch his name from the list of clerics. If God helps me, he will never be a cleric, where I am bishop. I hope to the merciful God, that you will faithfully and conscientiously follow my rules, as you have already gladly accepted them."¹

Pope Pius IX., in one of his first encyclicals to the bishops of the Catholic Church,

consortioque multorum, ut ab alio discas humilitatem, ab alio patientiam; hic te silentium, ille doceat mansuetudinem." Thus life in common will preserve from the evils of solitude.

¹ Serm. 356, n. 14.

tells us how the solitude of the priest should be utilized. Above all it is by *meditation and prayer*. "Omit not," he says, "to admonish all clerics and to induce them to withdraw often and at an opportune time into solitude, where, laying aside all worldly cares, they may meditate devoutly and zealously on the eternal and divine things, and wash off all dust and blemishes, which they have contracted in the world, renew the ecclesiastical spirit, put off the old man with his works and put on the new, who is made in justice and sanctity."¹

Meditation is, consequently, the foundation and condition of priestly life and aspirations, of apostolical perfection, the universal means to arouse the true spirit of Christian piety, to preserve, cultivate, and increase it in the heart of the candidate for the priesthood, and the most potent remedy for all ills of the soul. Meditation indeed requires solitude, but at the same time creates it, since all worldly thoughts cease, and God speaks alone to the soul. By meditation we lead a heavenly life, man dies a mystical death; but a new, higher life, hidden with Christ in God is engendered and quietly grows up. For, what is meditation? It is the thorough pondering over of the truths and facts of Christianity, which work on our fancy, intelli-

¹ Epist. encycl., "Qui pluribus" d. 9. Nov. 1846.

gence, heart and will equally, in order to become the rule, direction and motive of our actions. Only that can be called a true meditation, which considers man in the light of faith, which awakens in us a love for virtue and gives power to do and to bear, and which makes us morally better. Pius IX. has but voiced the opinion advocated by spiritual men of all centuries. He, who meditates not, does not erect his building on a rock, but upon the quick-sands of human wisdom and speculation, and all his labor must be considered as putting rocks into a pile;¹ his heart becomes hard and insensible for the things of God. The Church herself at ordination² requests the future priest to search day and night in the law of God, in order to grow up to the manhood of the years of Christ. Had all these been silent, yet the word of the Scriptures would speak loud enough: "Blessed is the man, who hath not walked in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of the sinner, nor sat in the chair of pestilence. But his will is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he shall meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in

¹ Bernard, *De consid.* II., c. 3.

² Pont. Rom. *De ordinat. presbyt.*

due season. And his leaf shall not fall off; and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.”¹ Yes, there the leaves do not fall off; there is not the intense heat of the sun to wither them, nor the frost of winter to kill them; there is continual blossoming and continual fruitage, for the soul has escaped the change of the earthly and has been planted along the running waters of eternity. “They that eat me, shall yet hunger, and they that drink me shall yet thirst.”² He who loves eternal truth, never tires of meditating on it; the more he draws from this deep well, the fount of all knowledge, the more he is urged on to approach it again, to draw of this water, which flows into life eternal. Thence he draws grace ever and ever, there the soil of his soul is fertilized, there the heavenly grain of the word of God springs up, there do the fruits mature unto eternity. Thus, according to St. Thomas, *meditation is the cause of devotion*, and the greater the knowledge of him who meditates, the greater will be his devotion, if he directs his knowledge to God.³

It is but a necessary law in the life of nature and of grace: The more man turns

¹ Ps. 1, 1-3.

² Eccli. 24, 29.

³ Summa II. II., q. 82, a 3, ad 3: Si scientiam et quamcumque aliam perfectionem homo perfecte Deo subdat, ex hoc ipso devotio augetur.

away from the sensible and visible, the more powerfully does the invisible act upon him, the more beautifully is an inner world established in him, the more noble and bliss-promissing does it appear to his vision; the sensual man has no knowledge of it, not even an idea of it. The more the mind knows how to renounce the earthly and vain, the more does it participate in the eternal and heavenly. This is the sense of that saying of the pious Thomas of Kempis: "Did you know how to empty yourself of the creature, how gladly would not God dwell within you and speak to you." For thus says the Lord: "If any man shall hear my voice and open to me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."¹ What was said to Mary: "Behold the master is here and calleth thee," has also been said to us, if we would but sit down in quiet meditation at His feet, and listen to Him, Who, as St. Augustine says, "*miris multisque modis*" speaks to our soul. The consolation, which man seeks in the created things, remains out of him and does not penetrate to the innermost depth of his soul; His word alone it is, which fertilizes that region of the soul, where the world does not reach, and where the loud noise of the world dies away. Yes, my dear

¹ Apoc. 3., 20.

friend, "taste and see that the Lord is sweet."¹ "The rich have wanted and have suffered hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good." There, in the midst of bodily want and poverty of spirit, we acquire immense fortunes. In meditating, the sun of eternal truth rises over our horizon,² we taste the sweetness of the Lord, so that nothing can please the soul but the thought of God, His love and mercy, the soul longs for nothing but to put aside sin and imperfection and thus to flee to Him, and it becomes easy for the soul to go the ways over which the hand of God leads it.³ As a friend converses familiarly with a friend, and a child with its mother, thus does the soul with God. It steps out of the solitude of meditation, as Moses on Mt. Sinai, with a beaming face; and since everything that it now views, appears to it clear and full of light, illumined by the splendor of the divine word, by the sunshine of holy love, it finds God in everything, in all places and on all roads, when at work and while resting, in an honorable position as well as when engaged in some humble avocation. God is now no longer distant from us, He is with us and in us; the thought of God now becomes a refreshing one to us in the work

¹ Ps. 33, 9. 11.

² S. Thom. Summ. II. II., q. 179, a. 1; q. 180, a. 1.

³ 1. c. q. 180, a. 2, a. 7 ad 1.

and heat of the day, and at the same time an invisible food, that satisfies us and strengthens us; for there is no bitterness in conversing with God, no disgust, but only joy and pleasure.¹ At early morning the soul thinks of Him, and, lying on its couch at night, its eyes revert to Him; a day in the tabernacles of God is more precious to it than thousands of days in the tents of sinners. The interior walking before the eyes of God makes a paradise of solitude; otherwise it is a dreary prison. St. Anthony in the desert complained that the rising sun disturbed him in his meditation, which he had continued all night; thus this pleasure in the Lord becomes the deepest root of a holy life, and, at the same time, its noblest and richest reward, a foretaste and preparation of that reward which will be ours, when we shall behold face to face Him, Who, though hidden from us whilst we were on earth, was nevertheless the life of our soul.

Where there is no meditation, where it is not known, nor practiced, where one has not learned, nor cares to learn to meditate, there the words of the prophet are fulfilled: "With desolation is all the land made desolate, because there is none that considereth in the heart."² For he, who knows not God, how

¹ Wisd. 8, 16.

² Jer. 12, 11.

can he love Him? "You cannot love a thing you know nothing of," says St. Gregory the Great.¹ Indeed, the heart of a priest, which flees communion with God, is desolate and void. No recollection, no piety, no warmth can be found there; there the salt of the earth has become tasteless, the light of the world dark and hidden in the mists; there the apostolic spirit has died, and the rich treasures of salvation, which the Lord of the Church had handed over to the priest for safekeeping, have been buried and forgotten. There is little blessing, although there may be much external activity; there is only the appearance of life, a shallow form without contents, "sounding brass and tinkling cymbal," much show and everything benumbed. "How is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed, the stones of the sanctuary are scattered in the top of every street?"² Not rarely have these stones become stumbling-blocks for the faithful, and tombstones for so many scandalized and lost souls. There are some to whom these words of the Holy Ghost are applicable: "Thou knowest not, that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked!"³ There are some, who have become tepid, powerless and without

¹ Hom. XXX in Evang. n. 1.

² Lament. 4, 1.

³ Apoc. 3, 17.

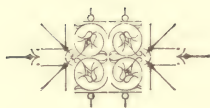
feeling, in whom the first love, with which they once joyfully dedicated themselves to the Lord of the Church, has grown cold.

Where is the seat of the evil, who can offer a remedy? St. Alphonsus gives us the answer; He who meditates not, hardly knows his faults, hardly knows the danger of losing the grace of God, hardly knows the means to overcome temptations, hardly knows the necessity of prayer; and he who prays not, will not conquer the enemy. Science cannot do it; it remains a sterile and incommodious thing, as the work of a laborer, if the word from within does not approach the word from without, if eternal light does not illumine the darkness of the intellect, that light, which is God Himself. ¹

It is not a rare occurrence to hear persons, whom we judge to belong to the lower class, and therefore uncultured, give expression to deep thoughts, to explanations at which we are surprised; we notice that they have an insight into the hidden ways of grace, and are experienced in the paths of the inner life, of which many, with all their scientific knowledge, have not even an idea. It is meditative prayer, which, under the veil of humility and simplicity, has taught them so much. They have learned to direct their gaze inward,

¹ August., De gratia Christ. et de pecc. orig. c. 24.

and have brought the sufferings of this life to the foot of the cross; they have become inner men.



LETTER XIII.

The Seminary.

(Conclusion.)

My dear Timothy, in my last letter I explained to you, what a seminary should be. It should cultivate the interior life. As fresh, clear water does not spring from the upper sand-stratum, but comes forth from the solid rock beneath, so it is in the spiritual life. All great men, even in the field of merely human activity, in poetry and art, were lovers of a retired life. Indeed, our inner life only is our real life; life, as it appears on the outer surface, is only its echo.

Jesus Christ Himself is the *highest model of interior life*. Augustus was seated on his throne, and the eyes of the world were directed toward him: Christ lay in the manger; who knew Him, who thought of Him? Augustus has passed away and all his splendor; he has passed into oblivion. Christ lives, and is the king of all hearts, and His reign has no end. For thirty years the veil of humility and seclusion was spread about His person, and nevertheless He carried all the power and all the wisdom and all the treasures of heaven in His heart, He,

Who, being poor, was subject to His parents. "And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger."¹ This is the sign that God dwells here, — poverty, quiet, humility; not crowns, nor palaces are named as a sign, but the manger. Thus He wished to come into this world, poor, quietly, noiselessly; behold the great lesson which Christ wished to teach us when He entered into the world. Man would not have invented this; it is above man's understanding. God alone could have taught thus, could have acted thus. Who, looking upon this humble Child, will henceforth be ashamed of humility; who, viewing His lowliness can continue to long for earthly greatness and external splendor? Who will not now understand, that our whole worth before God is within ourselves, that it does not consist in our exterior life? Imitating the life of Christ, a legion of saints have passed their lives removed from the noise and bustle of the outer world; men spoke not of them, their neighbors knew them not. They were like the grain of seed, which the husbandman plants in the furrows; it is apparently dead and going the way of corruption; snow covers it and storms pass over it; but wait, and the day will come, and ripe fruit

¹ Luke 2, 10.

will be yielded, sooner or later, perhaps only after years or decades of years, but certainly sometime. For thirty years the night of paganism still lay over the earth, after the star of salvation had already arisen over Bethlehem; for thirty years Israel longed for the Messiah, when He had already come in their midst; but Christ was leading His inner life, and had not as yet appeared before His people to preach to them. The shepherds went back to their sheep, and, one by one, descended into their graves; the Wise Men from the East went back to their homes, and everything remained quiet for thirty years. Christ as yet wished to lead His inner life. What a mystery, this hidden life of Jesus, this hidden life of the saints!

What is the exterior life? It is a life in the creature, in the visible, in the temporal, for the standard and rule of existence for all created things is time. Therefore it is a life from moment to moment, a life of continual change, a continual search and a continual want, a possessing and ever again losing, a hunger and thirst in all our enjoyments, poverty and misery under external splendor. *Ibi est locus quietis imperturbabilis*, says St. Augustine,¹ *ubi non deseritur amor, si ipse non deserat*; where I have no rest, where loss

¹ Conf. IV., 11.

always worries me, where desire always urges me, how can I find rest there?

What is the *inner life*? Sensual man understands not the things of the spirit, nor natural reason the things that are Christ's. The pagan calls it foolishness and the worldling insanity.¹ The inner life is a life in the eternal, in the lasting, a life escaping the vicissitudes of time, viewing everything in the light of eternity. The soul becomes a recluse in the midst of the bustle of the world; in the earthly it sees only the transitory back-ground of the eternal, and even if the earthly encompasses the soul from all sides, it does not penetrate into its depth; for God dwells there and His voice only is noticed by it. He, who has found a precious treasure, does not stoop to pick up a counterfeit pearl, no matter how much it may glitter. He, who has found a dwelling-place in a higher world, will no longer find a home in this transitory world.

And this inner life is rooted wholly in *faith*, and draws from faith its whole vigor. Faith becomes, as it were, a sixth sense, which enables us to recognize a new world, the kingdom of God and His eternal glory. Faith becomes light and eye at the same time, opening to our view the regions beyond, and giving us a new sight, before which all the

¹ Wisd. 5, 4.

glories of heaven and all the terrors of hell are unfolded; it is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not.¹ By it we hope against hope.² What kind of a power is this, my young friend, this power of faith! Where do you find a stronger proof than eye-sight, or the testimony of the senses, the things you have heard with your ears and touched with your hands? But stronger than all this is the conviction which faith gives us. "Paul, thou art beside thyself," the governor said to the apostle. And indeed, how could a worldling, for whom there is nothing higher than this visible world, regard him as anything but a fool, who despises the world, and aspires to an invisible creation? For this reason the pagans considered the fortitude of the martyrs as insanity, pitied them for their hallucinations, and condemned their stubbornness. And nevertheless they themselves were the fools, they the dreamers, and with them all are fools, who live but for this transitory world.³ But the just man liveth by faith.⁴

In faith our eyes discover new laws, the mind receives new powers, new aspirations;

¹ Hebr. 11, 1.

² Rom. 4, 18.

³ 1 Cor. 7, 31.

⁴ Rom. 1, 17.

the faithful disciple travels new roads, along which reason cannot lead him. Hence the wonderful insight faith gives us; the spiritual man judgeth all things.¹ Therefore, in the great questions of my life, in the most important affairs of my heart, I should rather follow simplicity illumined by faith, than the prudence of the world-wise. Hence this nobility of aspirations, this greatness of character, this whole, undivided man, in whom the inner life is the highest aim, external success nothing. Faith is the soul, without it everything, even the greatest and most glorious achievement, is like a decaying corpse.

Now the center of our life is no longer in this world; the present becomes bitter, the thought of eternity alone delights us. "He, who has once tasted in his heart the sweetness of heavenly joys," says St. Gregory the Great, "the inexpressible reward of the vision of the Bl. Trinity, to him everything external becomes the harder to bear, the greater the sweetness imparted to him by his interior life. He sighs and longs for heaven, everything earthly he treads under foot. And since he knows, that he is not as yet in his home, the tears become sweet, which he sheds here in exile. For it disgusts him to be bound to the transitory, and with great longing he

¹ 1 Cor. 2, 15.

longs for the eternal. The more we learn to know of the eternal, the more do we bewail the misery of our exile.”

Thus faith is the beginning and the root of all justification;¹ as the body is nourished with bread, so the soul is fed and grows strong by faith. Faith is a light to our soul, a splendid crown to our mind, which receives therefrom the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the gifts of wisdom and of understanding, the gifts of counsel and of fortitude, the gifts of knowledge and of godliness, and the gift of the fear of the Lord.

By living faith man sees God in everything outside of himself, and, most of all, within himself. Here the soul has the center of its life and of its whole activity; it rests in the inner life and is no longer compelled to waver, and roam about in darkness and error among created things; thus it receives a foretaste of the eternal rest of the blessed; its whole being is now stamped with the seal of holy and exalted rest, and supernatural safety and security; all its works are united harmoniously to the great masterpiece of a holy life, which we see designed by Christ for us. This holy, inner life has a language, a tone, a power of truth, the more persuasive and eloquent, the less showy

¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. VI., Decr. de justif., c. 8.

it is. For the inner man first spoke to God in prayer, before he went to speak to his neighbor. As the face of Moses beamed, after he had spoken to God, so does the unction of the divinity fill the words of such a priest, a reflex of the love and peace of God Himself. The more sublime our office, the more important our calling, the more difficult the work, the more are we admonished to grow and become strong inwardly. The more we are obliged to be active in the world, the more should we cultivate our inner world, after the example set by Christ, who taught during the day and spent the night in prayer. If the priest neglects to renew himself daily in spirit, the higher life of his soul will invariably be lost; he becomes an odor of death unto death, and not unto life.¹ The spiritual man is always steadfast, where others waver; he is always consistent, where others change; he is ever turned, undaunted and hopeful, towards his one aim, where others despair. He is ever ready to make a sacrifice; and why would he not discard what is transitory, since he already possesses everlasting riches.

What is deepest, holiest and the fullest of blessings in the life of a priest, is hidden from the sensible world, and covered with a veil of secrecy. It is only the exterior, the body so

¹ 2 Cor. 2, 16,

to say, of priestly activity, which the world can see, judge, praise or censure; God alone can see his real doings, his innermost deeds, the soul in his visible body. The prayers he has said behind closed doors, for himself and his parish, God alone can hear; his interior life is entirely a life of prayer and of familiar conversation with God; what the priest has suffered and struggled, nobody has seen but God alone; the day of judgment will eventually reveal that; what he has thought and meditated on for his own salvation and for the salvation of his congregation, nobody knows, not even he, who may have been continually at his side; but God knows it and will bestow the reward. The blessing of his whole exterior activity flows from his inner life, as from a fountain, and if this inner life runs dry, his outward activity will also vanish. This faithful looking up to God, in Whose presence he always stands, Whose holy affairs he, as a priest, cares for, Who examines his heart; Who alone judges in justice, before Whose eyes his heart is as an open book, this gives him strength and perseverance and joy, he is glad to be little and unknown in this world, to walk along the strait road that leads to Him, without deviating either to the right or to the left, without even casting a glance at those things, which are not God, nor come from God, nor lead to God.

This whole life, this whole inner life consecrated to God and blessed in God, rests on faith, on lively faith. Therefore no misfortune is so great, no sin so abominable, as apostasy from the faith, and therefore it is so necessary, my dear Timothy, to keep faith always alive within us. Faith teaches us to know God rightly, as so powerful and yet so loving, as just and yet merciful, as immense and yet dwelling in our hearts. He who is really penetrated by faith, sees God everywhere, hears God within himself; he converses familiarly with God, he participates here on earth in the pleasure of the heavenly banquet, he acquires that liberty of spirit, that peace, which the world does not know. "He that believeth, hath life everlasting."¹ We may fall, and even often; but where there is faith, there salvation is possible, there the root is still healthy, and every sickness may be cured. But faith once lost — all is lost. As in the natural life the insane has lost the right standpoint from which to judge himself and the world, as in such a one the harmony of the powers of the soul is destroyed, because the mental equilibrium has been lost and become disarranged, thus it is in the supernatural life of the infidel. He knows not God nor himself.

¹ John 3, 36; 6, 47.

Faith, my young friend, is cultivated, and with it, the inner life, by *meditation*. Thus the trend of my discourse leads me back to meditation.

Without meditation we are only half-theologians. Meditation is the connecting link between study and prayer, it is the vivifying breath, which leads knowledge unto act; without it our entire knowledge about God lives as a seed-grain in our soul, which, moistened neither by rain nor dew, remains dead. St. Bernard¹ says: *Quid prosunt haec scripta, lecta et intellecta, nisi temetipsum legas et intelligas? Da ergo operam internae lectioni, ut legas, inspicias, cognoscas te ipsum.* The knowledge of God remains external to us, it does not become our personal property; as yet we have faith, but not a living faith, which penetrates our actions, moves our heart and will. It lies in the very essence of the Christian truths, that the more we meditate on them, the more they reveal to us some new beauty, (as a work of art does the more we examine it); that they, primeval like God, appear always young to the meditating mind, that the eye never tires looking at them, and the heart never becomes sated with delight. "The mustard-seed," says an ancient writer, "is small; it has no taste, no sweetness, but

¹ *Medit. de cognit. hum. condit.*, c. 15.

rub it and you will soon take notice of its odor." In meditation you place yourself as a child in the arms of your God, you allow the eternal truths to act on your mind of their own accord. Do not be too intrusive, do not excite your fancy too much, allow your mind to rest on one thought, which will refresh your heart and move your will to action. One truth, one single truth, well pondered over, will bring us more blessings and further our spiritual life more, than many grand ideas and clever thoughts, which only hastily pass through our mind. Give every truth, which you meditate on, time to sink into your soul, and strike root there. Do not be over-anxious to repel distractions; this will only destroy your inward peace. Bear them patiently; they come and will also go; they teach you humility, and in humility and patience we must save our soul. When you have exhausted one truth then pass on to the next; if a single one furnishes enough food for your soul, then remain with that one. Give free scope to your feelings, let them follow naturally what your mind has conceived, and beware lest you force them. Humility, patience, obedience, love, these count more with God than intense feeling. And especially love. From love all other virtues borrow; from it the inner spiritual life draws its strength, as the

members of the body are nourished by the blood, which flows from the heart. And if distractions, like the waves of the ocean, inundate your soul, do not despair. Place yourself before the ever-present God, let Him do with you, as He pleases; this cry of ours to Him, one look from Him — and the storms raging in our hearts will be appeased, as the sea was calmed, when the disciples trembled.

The fruits of your meditations should become apparent in your life; your life must prove, that your meditations have not been merely a speculation, a mere being satisfied with feelings, which do not act upon the will, which do not become visible in deeds. Meditation, that does not excite to deeds, to the work of our calling, to patience, to sacrifice is not the real meditation of a spiritual man. Meditation, that does not generate patience, humility, love of God and of our neighbor, will lead you to hallucinations and nervous sentimentality, it will weaken and unnerve your soul. Therefore, my young friend, do not work without meditating, nor meditate without working. Lazy quietism on the one hand, and prayerless work on the other, have led many astray, who meant well.

Thus meditation unites theory and practice, knowledge and life, cognition and love; it en-

compasses the two fundamental aspirations of the human mind, and satisfies them. Thus ascetic life receives from science clearness and certainty of principles, and science from love receives warmth and life, and is therefore wholly devoted to the service of God. Thus theological knowledge is brought down to practice, and practice is borne aloft and guided by knowledge; life thus becomes the visible incarnation of doctrine, and doctrine the enlightening thought of life. Whatsoever great intellectual men have outwardly done, was drawn from their heart. Quite often science and asceticism, erudition and edification have been brought into opposition to one another. So many devotional books are poor in grand thoughts and wanting in adequate theological treatment; and therefore they are, now too strict, then again too sweetish and sentimental. Theological science is often a sterile collection of notes and sophistic subtleties, a piling up of philological and archaeological ballast, a campus of bitter polemics, that have no influence on the inner man and dry up one's heart. It was not so with the old thinkers; St. Anselm of Canterbury found and expressed the deepest thoughts in prayer and meditation; and who knows not the writings of St. Augustine, in which prayer, meditation and

speculation equally instruct, influence, and edify us? And, indeed, is it not the living God, of Whom our theology treats, the God of our fathers, Who has done great things among the nations and in our own soul, the God Whom we love, to Whom we pray; — theology is not an abstract, dead science, that has no heart for us.

Thus *scientia* becomes *sapientia*, *science*, *wisdom*. The body lives on food, the soul on ideas, the just liveth by faith. This is the difference; the body assimilates the food it eats; the soul is assimilated by the spirit on which it feeds. Here we become great. Who is great? Surely only he, who bears great things in his soul, who is filled by them, who devotes his life to them. He is greater than all things, who makes the things of God his own, for God is the greatest. Thus we become happy, blessed already here on earth. In meditation the priest stands before God, his soul dwells on high and he touches the earth only with the extremity of his garments; he acquires a supernatural strength, because God is with him, because he hopes for nothing from this world, and is afraid of nothing. Thus that peace enters into his soul, that holy quiet, in which we perceive the breath of God upon us, and, at times, the whole world is dead

to us. "The disciples came, and were with Him. O blessed day! O blessed night! Who can say what the Lord spoke to them!"¹

But, my young friend, it is time to close this letter. I wish to add only a few more remarks.

If we consider the enthusiastic words, with which all great saints and spiritual men praise meditation, we must conclude therefrom, that it is a moral *necessity*, especially for the priest. For this reason St. Charles Borromeo did not want to admit anyone to Holy Orders, who was not an expert in meditation. Nothing indeed is more adapted to *preserve us from sin* than meditation. St. John Chrysostom says: "You can preach, and commit sin; but you cannot pray and meditate, and persevere in sin." It is therefore our shield and our weapon to preserve us in this world from sin. It is necessary for the *fulfilment of our duties*. In meditation our soul is set aglow; it enlightens and warms our surroundings; then only will the words of our *sermon*, like flames of fire, spread over our audience and ignite it; then only will that unction, which can be felt and experienced, but not described, penetrate them; it is the spirit of God that speaks in us and by us and infuses divine life into our

¹ August. tr. VII. in Joan. c. 9.

human words. In the *sacrament of penance*, at the *sick-bed*, where the soul of a priest becomes visible, the man of meditation and prayer will know, how with wonderful power to move the human heart, how to admonish, to strengthen, to console; there the peace of God, which he has acquired by meditation, will flow from him; there a holy unction, visible in his appearance, will fill the heart of the sinner with confidence, so that he will open his heart to the priest. And, lastly, how will the priest worthily celebrate that *great Sacrifice*, which he offers up daily on the altar, if he has not humbled himself to the dust, if he has not pondered over the holy mystery in its greatness and majesty, and if, as he envelops his body in white linen, he has not also freed his mind from the dust of the earth, if he is not penetrated with holy thoughts and become like to the angels, who, with him, adoring, stand at the steps of the altar. Meditation also *renders all the troubles of the priests easy to bear*; for the thought of God, which at the morning meditation, has sunk deep into our souls, illumines, as sun-light, all our actions, and gives them an eternal significance. Then nothing is enough, nothing too difficult, because it is done for God. How *true* therefore are the words of St. Bernard: *Tam pio otio nullam operam dare, nonne vitam perdere est?*

The most opportune time for meditation is the early morning hour; the holy psalmist says: "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted.". Thus meditation becomes the morning-offering which the soul, awakening to new life, brings to the Creator, as Israel brought the first-fruits of the harvest. To Him everything belongs, to Him therefore should everything be given back, and thus our day's-work be sanctified. As regards the *method* of meditating, I have already given you the salient points. The conviction, that meditation is necessary, has given rise to many rules and methods; but as regards these we may say: "The abundance has made us poor." True, meditation, as every other activity of the mind, follows certain rules; but multiplicity of rules only weakens our flight upward; God's word, spoken to the soul, is not bound down by these rules; the spirit of God breathes when and wherever it pleases. What is easier than to direct imagination and memory, understanding and knowledge, heart and will, in a regulated manner, toward the truths of faith? What is easier than to ponder over the mysteries of the life and passion of Jesus Christ, by looking at the persons concerned, hearing their words and considering their actions? The

methods of St. Ignatius and St. Francis de Sales allow the mind the greatest liberty while meditating. An ancient master of the spiritual life says: *Meditatio est studiosa occultae veritatis investigatio*; and therefore it is first of all precisely an act of the intellect, and should guard us against imaginary pictures and hallucinations and gushes of sentiment; but it does not exclude everything else; it works on our feelings, arouses our will and calls forth holy sentiments and resolutions. As long therefore as we can draw out of one point, out of one truth, instruction, light and incentive to action, we must not, as I have already remarked, relinquish it and go on to another; we should imitate the bee, that does not leave a flower until it has extracted all the honey. We should not accumulate truths, nor be in a hurry, but should take our time, and taste to satiety all the sweetness contained therein. “Not the amount of knowledge, but the taste of the truths satisfies the longing of our soul.”¹

My dear friend, I have written somewhat lengthily on this subject. It is, as you know, of the utmost importance; meditation conditions all the fruit of the priesthood; from it flows blessing and supernatural unction over the whole sacerdotal life, over the whole

¹ Ignat. Exerc. spirit.

priestly activity. St. Gregory the Great,¹ the great master and model of the priest, says: "Only then will a priest fulfil all the duties of his calling rightly, when the spirit of reverence and love for God penetrates him, and he daily ponders over the word of God; for only so will he preserve holy fervor, who is continually exposed to the danger of becoming cold. In the intercourse with men the heart will soon become weak and lose itself in the turmoil of temporal business; therefore it should, by meditating on the Holy Scriptures, always gather new strength."

Now we have gained a standpoint, from which to judge of the *mission* of the ecclesiastical seminary. The abundance of rules and regulations does not testify to the good spirit of a seminary; the words of Tacitus may be applied here: *Plurimae leges, pessima respublica*. The strictest isolation of its inhabitants from the outside world is likewise not a proof of the correct spirit; for in the solitude of the desert the anchorites were tempted by satan, and bad thoughts and pictures of an excited imagination will mount the highest walls. Nor either strict exterior discipline and the multitude of devotions and mortifications;² for all this belongs to the exterior man; the Aztecs of Mexico and

¹ Reg. past. p. II., c. 11.

² cf. Scupoli, *Spiritual Combat*, ch. 1.

the Fakirs of India do all this and even more; the kingdom of God is "within you." The spirit it is that vivifies, and everything is useless and even injurious, if it does not come from the spirit, if it is not an expression of the spirit. The root and essence of Christian perfection is the *love of God above all, and of our neighbor on account of God*; ¹ therefrom do all other practices receive their significance and worth. There is no measure, no limit to this high, holy love of God; who would venture to say that he can not increase in the love of God, in self-oblation to God? In the practices of prayer, of mortification etc., everybody has a limit set for him by his calling, by his bodily and spiritual constitution, which he cannot transgress without injury to his spiritual life; and we know that these pious exercises do not derive their significance as means and expression of the holy love of God from themselves; it is this love which gives them measure and guidance; by themselves they can become immoderate, exaggerated and disordered, but not so the love of God; it is above all measure and knows no other rule but God Himself. Here

¹ Thom. Summ. II. II., q. 184, a. 1, ad 2: Vita christiana specialiter in charitate consistit, per quam anima Deo coniungitur, unde dicitur 1 Joan. 3, 14.: Qui non diligit, manet in morte. Et ideo secundum charitatem attenditur simpliciter perfectio christianae vitae. cf. Rom. 6, 14.

there are no limits; he, who has dedicated himself to a state of perfection — and such is the life of the priest — knows not a standstill, but only constant progress.

What is the object of the seminary? It aims at preserving us from the corruption of the world, from its temptations and its wiles; its mission is to exhort us and to guide us to renew the inner man according to the image of God; to hold before us the ideals of the priesthood in Jesus Christ. We should be educated up to these ideals, in order thus to perfect ourselves more and more according to His example. We should learn spiritual self-culture, in order to be able to practice it during our whole lives. The object of the *rule of life* in the seminary is to educate the future priest within himself; it is of no value, if it does not do this. As the rule of the Old Law represented to the perfect Israelite an ideal, so the rule in the seminary should represent the life of a priest as it should be according to the will of God and of Holy Church. Sooner or later he must leave the seminary, the eye of a superior will watch him no more, there will be no rules to guide him, no walls to separate him from the world; he will be then a rule to himself, his own superior and, living in the midst of the pleasures of the world, nevertheless separated by the

distance of heaven from the world. If the seminary produces such an effect in its students, then it has fulfilled its mission. And for this very reason, the seminarist esteems highly the rules and obeys them scrupulously. In their essential points, to be sure, they have come down to us from preceding centuries; the majesty of years lies upon them; great, saintly men have worked to formulate them, and the best priests of the diocese have been educated under them. If the pupil obeys them, he does not obey human, but divine laws. By observing them carefully, he exercises himself in the most beautiful of virtues, — obedience. How can he later on command, if he has not first learned to obey? How can he be called a disciple of Christ, who has not learned to be obedient with Him? But, by subjecting his wavering will to obedience, it becomes manly and truly free; in thus giving himself into the hands of a spiritual director, he learns to become truly independent. Man, every man is blind, if he has to pass judgment upon himself, if he has to guide himself; self-love deceives him; he needs a guide, who stands outside of him, beyond the sphere of his inclinations and above it, in order to lift him up and draw him to himself. He, who withdraws himself from such direction, who

wishes to follow only his own bent of mind, remains as a reed, moved hither and thither by every wind and movement of his whims, at one time full of courage, at another despairing, to-day starting this, to-morrow something else; he will never be a man, nor a steadfast, great character, as the saints and so many excellent priests have been, high-minded, enduring, full of the spirit of sacrifice, great in their deeds, and greater still in their sufferings.

From what I have said you may judge of another matter of which I have already spoken. A life in accordance with and in *the spirit* of the rule will, on the one hand, advance more and more your interior life, while on the other hand, it is but a result of this life. The more our time becomes a time of shallow-mindedness, the more the priest is required to recollect himself, to become a *true spiritual man*, since everywhere the carnal, sensual, transitory life, like a broad stream, overflows all inward thought and sentiment.

Where there is an inner life, a life separated from the things of this world, there will be found also the spirit of *science*. "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth."¹ The hermits in the desert required their fol-

¹ Mal. 2, 7.

lowers to work, for without work, they said, it is impossible to persevere on the road to perfection.¹ Intellectual work therefore is a necessary duty of the future priest.

“Learn first, before you teach,” says St. Jerome,² “be ready to give an account of the faith and the hope that is in you. Be experienced and instructed in the mysteries of salvation Nothing is easier, than with a multiplicity of words to carry away with you an ignorant audience, who admire the more, the less they understand The ignorant man must not imagine that he is a saint, because he has learned nothing. The apostle admonished Titus to be well versed in the Scriptures; for holy ignorance, as much as it may edify on the one hand, the more does it injure on the other, because it cannot withstand the enemy.” Behold the difference between the justice of the ignorant and of the learned!³ “They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity.”⁴ Some imagine, that, since they are

¹ Cassian, *De coenob. instit.* X., 14.: *Causas tantorum vulnerum, quae de radice osiositatis emergunt, uno operationis salutari praecepto curavit (Paulus), ut peritissimus medicorum; caeteras quoque valitudines malas eodem cespite pullulantes sciens protinus extinguendas, origine morbi principalis exempta.* Basil, *Reg. fus. tract.*, interrog. 37.

² Ep. LII., *Ad Nepot. c.* 7, sq.

³ Hieron., Ep. LIII., *Ad Paulinum.*

⁴ Dan. 12, 3.

the disciples of the apostolic fishermen, sanctity consists in gross ignorance, nay, that they are therefore saints, because they have not learned anything.¹ "Knowledge puffeth up,"² if it only partially occupies the mind, and, by excluding the cultivation of the heart and will unto love, maims and cripples man; but we are not now discussing this gnosis, which the apostle has in mind. John Trithemius remarks: Ignorantia plures habet superbos, quam humiles; I suppose in his office of abbot he amply experienced it.

Where there is true, Catholic science, there also is Catholic love. And next to God, what could be its object, if not God's spouse, the Church? In my earlier writings I have made a few remarks on the significance, mission, grandeur and beauty of our Holy Church;³ but however much may be said about it, it is never enough. In *one* word all is said. She is the spouse of the Lord. What has not the heavenly Bridegroom done for His spouse? He has imprinted His seal on her forehead, He has placed the crown of immortality upon her head, as with a shield of light He has armed her against the weapons of error and falsehood. He has given Himself to

¹ Hieron., Ep. XXVII., Ad Marcellam, c. 1.

² 1 Cor. 8, 1,

³ Apology, vol. II., 3. (7th ed. vol. V.)

her, and for centuries now she has Him in her midst, and distributes Him to all generations, and continually makes of us, who are children of the dust and of sin, children of God.

Science teaches us, that it is through the Church, that we must come to Christ. His love leads us to her, our mother, by whose hands He willed to distribute to us His gifts and His graces: His word in the sermon, sanctification and redemption in the sacrifice and in the sacraments, Himself in Holy Communion. *Credamus, fratres; quantum quisque amat ecclesiam Dei, tantum habet Spiritum Sanctum*; these words of St. Augustine have a deep meaning.¹ She it is, that constantly, unto the end of days, gives birth to new sons and daughters of Christ.² As a child looks up to its mother, and obeys her words, her commandments and her wishes, so does the young levite reverently look up to the Church. And since he adores Christ as the invisible head of the Church, he never ceases to show respect and obedience to her visible head instituted by Christ; from him we receive what we are to believe, to hold and to do.

The name 'church', as St. Chrysostom remarks, denotes a society.³ Therefore, where

¹ August., Tract. in Joan. XXXII., 8.

² August., Ep. XCVIII., 3 sq.

³ In Ep. I. ad Cor., hom. I., 1.

there is an inner and truly Catholic life, there is likewise mutual *love*. “Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, is not puffed up, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, seeketh not her own, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”¹ If one has not this charity, he is, with all his wisdom and all his faith, but a sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. Nay, if it were possible that he could prophesy and move mountains, and know all hidden things and give his goods to the poor, he would nevertheless be dead fruit, because charity does not animate him. Therefore the apostle says: “Charity is the fulfilment of the law.”² Charity is the greatest virtue, greater than faith, greater than hope, for it is the divine bud, springing from both of them. Since we love God Who has opened His heart to all of us, and loves us with an infinite love, and wishes to give us of His own, of His truth and His happiness, of His glory and His heaven, yea, Himself, we must also love our brethren, give love for love. Where a heart is warm with love, it will also enkindle love in others. All other virtues are bestowed with love; mercy, meekness, patience, humility. Where there is well-regul-

¹ 1 Cor. 13, 1.

² Rom. 13, 10.

ated charity, it illumines our whole outward activity. The formalities of etiquette, which the world has adopted, and which facilitate social intercourse, are mostly empty words; true, Christian charity gives them a meaning, makes them truthful and significant. And therefore a seminarist will cultivate in a higher measure *true politeness* and *correct manners*, if he never forgets, that Christ came into this world to serve and not to be served,¹ that He has given us an example to wash each other's feet;² if he does not forget to render due esteem to the dignity and position of others, to render them what they deserve as brethren of Christ and co-heirs of heaven, such as, sympathy, help, friendship and kindness. The seminary is not intended to educate you unto a pharisaical obedience to the law, but unto judgment, mercy and faith.³

If you have learned this and practiced it in the seminary, my young friend, you may courageously go out into the world to work in your calling. The spirit of the seminary will remain in you, no matter whither you are sent; it has become united to you, it has become incorporated in you, namely, the spirit of *prayer*, the spirit of *science*, the spirit of *love* and of *sobriety*;⁴ in one word the spirit *of adoption of sons*.

¹ Matth. 20, 28. ² John. 13, 14. ³ Matth. 23, 23. ⁴ 2 Tim. 1, 7.

LETTER XIV.

The Spiritual Exercises.

In my last letter I spoke to you of your entrance into the seminary, and of the spirit which should reign there, the spirit of prayer and meditation, the spirit of science, the spirit of love and sobriety. To cultivate this, there must be laid a deep foundation, and that in the beginning, upon which the edifice of your seminary and priestly life will securely rest. This is done by the Spiritual Exercises. Innocent XI., Clement XI., and other popes, and lastly Leo XIII. have laid down, that no-one should be admitted to Holy Orders, who has not previously made a ten-day's retreat. Clement XI. exhorts the bishops to explain to their clergy the importance of such retreats, and he advises priests to make one every year. And, when the spirit of Jansenism and Josephinism, at the so-called Synod of Pistoja, condemned these exercises, the Apostolic See in the person of Pius VI., in the year 1794 spoke anew with full authority in their favor.¹

¹ "Auctorem Fidei" d. 28 August, 1794. Prop. 65: Propositio annuntians: Irregularem strepitum novarum institutionum, quae dicta sunt exercitia vel missiones forte

If, my young friend, you wish to know the mysterious fount, from which priests draw their whole strength, courage and joy, the practice that alleviates the burden of his calling, that shields him against all attacks in his intercourse with the world, that wards off the smallest beginning of evil, and plucks it out by the root if it has already crept in, I must refer you to the “Spiritual Exercises.” Had we not the authority of the popes in its favor, — its origin, history, the fruits it has borne in renewing priests, would give sufficient testimony, that the Holy Ghost dwells in them, and their universal esteem and practice would show so evidently the hand of God, that we should have to be wilfully blind not to see it. What the general of the Augustinians, Aegidius of Viterbo, said at the last Lateran council in the year 1511: *Homines per sacra immutari fas est, non sacra per homines*, is to be effected by means of the Spiritual Exercises. True, many thousands have, at all times since the existence of the Church, practiced the spiritual life; the garden of the Church has at all times yielded

nunquam aut saltem perraro eo pertingere, ut absolutam conversionem operentur ; et exteriores illos commotionis actus, qui apparuere, nihil aliud fuisse quam transeuntia naturalis concussionis fulgura — temeraria, male sonans, perniciosa, mori pie et salutariter per Ecclesiam frequentato et in verbo Dei fundato injuriosa.

the fairest blossoms of true Christian mysticism and asceticism. It suffices to refer to the writings of the mystics in the earliest part of the Middle Ages, to review the long list of saints who have trodden the way of perfection and have shone by heroic virtues, who are models of the spiritual life, and who in their writings and by their words are its teachers.

Every period has its own wants, every sickness requires its own specific. The cry for *reform* had gone forth in the sixteenth century; it went from city to city, from country to country; it was a magic sound, which the more powerfully seized the minds of men, the more obscure the meaning that was attached to it, the greater the sphere of action the imagination found in it. Thus it happened that not only those who inclined to rebellion and disorder found in this word "reformation" an idea of the corrupt wishes of their hearts, but others also, who meant well, were thereby led astray. It all depended where the reformation was to begin, and by what means it was to be carried out.

Martin Luther and St. Ignatius form the antipodes to each other; not long after the great Aegidius had enunciated the above-mentioned principle, Luther attempted the exact opposite; his human, defective passionate 'ego' tried to reform the sanctuary,

the Catholic Church and her doctrine; he wished to create a human church.¹ St. Ignatius acted quite differently. He wished to reform himself and the people of his time, who were to a great extent sick in head and members, and permeated with a worldly spirit; he wished to convert them to the eternal, unchangeable truths and laws of the gospel. So the sixteenth century saw a twofold reformation: the one outside and in opposition to the Church, the other in the Church and in her spirit.

It is God Himself come down upon earth in the eternal, incarnate Word, appearing to the world and speaking to it, "full of grace and truth," it is the great example of the saints through the ages of the Church, it is lastly the Spirit of God dwelling and living in the Church and teaching her and creating in her members a supernatural life, that acts in these Spiritual Exercises, to call souls away from the vanity of a worldly life, to induce them "to cleanse themselves of the dust and the blemishes, with which the world has tarnished them, to renew in themselves the ecclesiastical spirit, to put off the old man with his works, and to put on the new, who is made in justice and sanctity."²

¹ cf. Cyprian, Ep. LII. ad Cornel.

² Ep. encycl. Pii IX. d. 9. Nov. 1846.

This is the reformation the Church has always striven after, a reformation as well of all the faithful, as of whole countries, provinces and orders, as likewise of the individual in the narrower circle of his inner life and calling. The idea God had in creating man, the mission He gave him, the destiny He placed before him, the road which He marked out for him, form the irremovable standard, according to which he is to regulate his whole life, and are the rule and measure of our thoughts and deeds. Indeed, meditation, of which I spoke to you in my last letter, is a fountain, from which our soul daily drinks, a higher respiratory organ of the mind, in order that the soul may not weaken under the exertion of daily work; but as our body needs sometimes a period of special care, of recreation and attention, in order to prevent sickness and to recuperate, so does our spiritual life. And this is the object of the Spiritual Exercises. They lead us into solitude, and there by meditation, prayer and spiritual reading, which in well-ordered array presuppose, confirm and supplement each other, they allow the eternal truths to work powerfully on our souls; the heinousness of sin, the terrors of hell, and all that will induce our hearts to love, are placed before the eyes of our soul, which, deprived of all intercourse

with the world, is alone and lives with God. Thus the Spiritual Exercises lead us to their real object, the *choice*, namely of a *vocation*, and the *order* for our *whole life*.

If such be the end of the retreat, you will easily understand, my young friend, how extremely useful it is for everyone and how necessary, especially for those who wish to become priests. Here the soul is to be rendered capable to tear itself away from all earthly love and from all attachment to creatures; turning to the eternal only, the bands fall that held it fast to the world. Here the soul is induced to place itself unreservedly into the hands of God, and to go the way God leads it, not fearing earthly sufferings, to look at its vocation and life in the light of eternity.

And this solitude of the retreat, this holy silence of the soul, is the solitude of your seminary and priestly life. To the sensual man it appears hard, for he fears nothing more than to be alone with himself, to meditate on himself. And even, in the greatest exterior solitude, how seldom is he really alone? The recollections of the past, the plans for the future, the thousand and more fanciful pictures that entice him, create during the retreat an inner world, which keeps him busy, distracts him and draws his attention away from himself, as much as the distractions of a business life.

True, it is hard, very hard for a man to be alone with himself, with his sinful, poor, unquiet, reproachful self. But this he should not be. The soul ought to be alone with itself *and God*; without God solitude becomes a prison, with Him, a paradise.

Since it is the imagination that is most active in solitude, and, although we are then far from men and the world, it nevertheless represents to us the doings of the world with all its allurements, and never permits our soul to become perfectly quiet, the Spiritual Exercises especially call the *imagination* and the *memory into their service*. In the preludes to the meditations the soul must therefore vividly represent to itself the mystery to be meditated on. The memory must recall to our minds the truths and facts, our intellect must ponder over the meaning, origin and cause and effects of the mystery, and unite them all; then the heart, full of shame, contrition and hope, will offer itself to the ever-present God.

In *contemplation* the soul receives holy rest and blissful delight. Here discursive thought steps into the background, and the soul, like Mary rests at the feet of the Lord. "If you wish to enjoy the Lord," says St. Bonaventure, "then be present at everything He says or does, as if you heard it with your own ears and saw it with your own eyes, offering your-

self to Him, delighted, forgetful of the world." Here we see Him in the different stages of His life; we kneel with the shepherds before His manger, we travel with Him and His disciples over the fields of the Holy Land, we see His miracles, hear His words, we follow Him into His solitude of prayer; we hear the blessed words He speaks to Mary Magdalen, His lamentation over Jerusalem, His last admonition to Judas the traitor. How He stands before us, the scourged and thorn-crowned Saviour, clothed in the scarlet cloak! Raised on the cross He addresses to us seven times words of instruction, of sorrow, of consolation. We accompany Joseph of Arimathea at the burial of Jesus, we rejoice with Mary and the disciples at His resurrection, our eyes follow Him ascending into heaven. Thus we enjoy the nearness of the Saviour; here we take hold of the extremity of His garment and notice, that a power goes forth therefrom, that heals, strengthens, elevates; here we likewise experience, what the disciples, going to Emmaus did; here, in like manner, our hearts burn and rejoice, because He speaks to us; here we feel His heavenly breath warming us; here the whole world vanishes, and we surmise the proximity of eternity.

The Spiritual Exercises of a retreat form an organic whole from the first to the last medi-

tation, a complete and strictly ordered system, where one meditation presupposes the other, and one follows from the other. From day to day the meditation progresses from truth to truth with a merciless logic. There is to be found no contradiction, escape is impossible; the soul must surrender. And herein lies to a great extent the powerful efficacy of the Spiritual Exercises. Some meditations form the essential and constructive columns that bear the whole; others are conditioned by these and illustrate them in different ways. The essential meditations make the exercises what they are; their omission would spoil them and lessen their power for good; the others, on the contrary, may be added, when, and as many as are suitable. Among the essential ones we must place the '*foundation*,' i. e. the meditation on the end of man and of all creation; then the meditation on the *kingdom of Christ*, and of the *two banners*, of the *three classes of men*, of the *three degrees of humility* which bring on the climax of the exercises, — the selection of a vocation. The meditation on the *love of God* at the close of the retreat corresponds to the '*foundation*,' as the end does to the beginning; for the sanctification and perfection of the human soul consists in the love of God.

The other meditations are linked with these

principal and fundamental ones. The secondary meditations are especially, those on *sin* under its different shapes and forms, on death, judgment, hell, on the *mysteries of the life and passion of Christ*. It is sin that deflects us from the correct, sole and highest aim; it is the allurements of the vain, transitory world, to whose temptations we are daily exposed, that keeps us bound to the world, and obscures our view of the eternal truths. The thought of death, judgment and hell should therefore tear us away from the love of vanity, and effect a renewal of our inner self, which then asks for nothing else than to be led by the hand of God, without regard for whatever may please or displease the sensual man. The meditations on the life and passion of Christ follow. He is the guide on the way to Christian perfection; He is the way, the truth and the life; in Him we see them visibly. Thus the imitation of Christ is the aim of these meditations, for it is the beginning and end, the rule and strength of Christian perfection. The meditation on the kingdom of Christ introduces us into these mysteries of our divine Saviour. "Follow me" says this grand, victorious king. All ought to enlist in His army, ought to combat with Him, and share with Him labor, dangers and wounds, and likewise a great reward. This service in

the army of the Lord will not be hard, for He is the general; He goes before, He shares the work and dangers with us, He leads us to victory.

Now, the soul, having with all the angels and saints joyfully joined its king and sworn allegiance to Him, ready for any event, has become capable of proceeding to the meditation "*on the two banners.*" The object of this meditation is not to *select* whom we wish to *follow*; that has preceded; in meditating on the "foundation" the soul has already eschewed sin, and meditating on the kingdom of Christ, it has formed the resolution courageously to follow the Lord whithersoever He calls, nay, even to offer itself spontaneously to yet higher and nobler deeds than mere ordinary service calls for, namely, to struggle against self-love and the love of earthly things, even when and where such love were allowable. The soul wants to be near its Lord and Master. Now it examines the ways and means, by which it can live up to its resolutions, and so it selects the calling under the banner of Christ; it endeavors likewise to comprehend the stratagem the devil makes use of to lead it away from Christ; love of riches, longing for worldly honors, and pride, are the traps he sets to catch men; love of poverty, of humiliations, of contempt, which give birth in us to the

true spirit of humility, these are the weapons of Christ. The impression this meditation makes on us is confirmed and exemplified by the meditation on the "*three classes of men.*" This meditation should induce us to make practical resolutions to follow the Lord as closely as possible, to share with Him contempt and suffering; the wish must become deed. Some wish to follow Jesus, but do not use any means; others use some means, but they will not sacrifice their favorite inclinations, and would rather compel God to condescend to their wishes. Others, lastly, give themselves to God without reserve; they ask for nothing but that the will of God be done.

Now follows the last meditation, after which the soul definitely comes to a decision, and that for ever, — the meditation on the *three degrees of humility*. For in the humble disposal and oblation of one's self to God consists the essence of perfection. In the *first* degree we wish spontaneously, and this not even for the whole world, never to commit a mortal sin; in the *second* we flee venial sin, even if by committing it, we could avoid death; in the *third* degree we willingly choose all that will make us most like unto Christ, we share His poverty and nakedness, contempt and folly in the eyes of the world, and love on His account these things more than all riches, honors and the praise of science,

Since this is the most important meditation, no particular place has been assigned to it; it forms the *central-idea* of the retreat. Around it are grouped a series of meditations on the life of the Lord from His baptism by St. John until His entrance into Jerusalem. Now the soul, being free from all attachment to creatures, love of earthly things having no more room in it, the longing to be like to the Master wholly penetrating it, and wishing to be consumed in loving flames as an oblation to God, fully and eternally consecrated to Him, it becomes capable to choose.

Which of these degrees should I possess? you will ask me. "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments," says the Lord.¹ That degree of oblation to God, which simply avoids mortal sin, and is the necessary condition of salvation, cannot be the object of your choice. Have you not long ago known your end, have you not long ago weighed the importance and value of the world in the scales of God? Extinguish not the spirit which excites to struggle for a higher aim.² We must strive for a higher degree; without this, we shall sooner or later become lukewarm, and be at a standstill, and we shall recede. *He that can take the word, let him*

¹ Matth. 19, 17.

² 1 Thess. 5, 19.

take it; ¹ let love elevate him to the second and third degree. God, having great things in store for him, has called him, He has placed the desire in his heart, He has armed him with supernatural strength, He has given him the grace of a vocation, He has already prepared the crown for him. Where God is so liberal, who would wish to be ungenerous?

Now *reformation* follows; it is the necessary result of our choice. Our vocation, which we have known in the light of eternity, now becomes our rule, by which our life is to be ordered; as a new man, renewed in sanctity and justice to the image of Him, Who created him, ² we shall then go forth out of solitude; the old things in us have passed away, now all are to become new. ³ Manifold and various are the things to be reformed and renewed in us; but there is *one* principle, applicable to everyone, no matter what calling he has: In so far will you progress in spiritual life, in as far as you put away self-love and egotism.

The climax of the Exercises has been reached; but the things we have experienced, known and felt in the retreat, and the resolutions we have made, must be rooted ever deeper and deeper in our souls. And there-

¹ Matth. 19, 12.

² Eph. 4, 24.

³ Apoc. 21, 5.

fore there now opens up to us a series of meditations on the *passion* of Christ. The cross now becomes a book, in which we continually read. Now the soul grows strong in the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ; now its sympathies for the Sufferer become deeper and deeper; now it longs more and more to share with Him pains and sufferings, to stand under His cross, to die with Him. Here on the cross it beholds anew in its terrible reality, in its soul-piercing power all the truths which it had meditated on: the heinousness of sin, the terrors of the divine judgment, the ingratitude of man, the infinite love of the Son. From the cross the meditating soul hears a voice, the voice of its Redeemer: All this I have done for you; what have you done, what are you going to do for me? And then the soul answers again and again: Lord, Thou knowest, that I love Thee. When it ponders over, at what price, with what blood and wounds and bitter death it has been bought, then it realizes, what it really is. Then it hastens to be as close to its Lord as possible, to work with Him, to combat with Him for the salvation of souls. The soul must not stand still at the meditation on the passion; as Christ, after the bitterness of Good Friday, beheld the joys of Easter Sunday, so must the soul also pass

on to the meditation of joyful things and of eternal bliss. The events of the resurrection and of the ascension will henceforth form the subject of its thoughts. Anxiety and sorrow have now passed away; with the Virgin and the disciples the ascetic now cries out: Christ has arisen! and in His resurrection he sees the pledge of his own resurrection and glory. Hallelujas now fill the soul; it is full of hope and joy; the soul should now forget all thoughts which cause sorrow; when awakening in the morning, it should rejoice in the glory of the Risen One, and, looking at pleasant nature, at blooming flowers and green trees, illumined by the light of the sun, support and preserve this joyous feeling.

The crown of the retreat is the meditation "*to awaken spiritual love;*" for in the love of God, our highest aim and perfection consists, and all preceding ones, especially those on the life and passion and resurrection of the Lord, have it for their aim. As the "foundation" constitutes the beginning, so does this meditation form the *climax* and *completion* in the spiritual life. There the ascetic should learn his mission and end, i. e. to praise God, to revere Him, to serve Him and thus to save his soul; here, what is highest and most perfect in the service of God, is to be placed before his soul. As spiritual men observe, this

meditation may be joined repeatedly to the meditations on the resurrection, or it may form their conclusion.

This meditation presupposes *two* principles: true love proves itself in deeds, and, where there is true love, there also is a mutual offering of all goods in the possession of the lovers, in as far as this is possible. The Exercises place before us four motives for the love of God. They are: all the gifts of nature, of grace, the love of God showing itself in all creatures, and within myself; this love of God is always active, always working, so to say, laboring for my salvation. It is the love of God from which issues everything high and noble and beautiful in the universe, proceeding from it as streams do from a fountain, as light from the sun. And therefore we love God for His own sake, “*propter magnam gloriam tuam.*”

The author of the book on Spiritual Exercises has divided it into *four* weeks, not as if he wished thereby to prescribe a certain length of time, but only to denote the gradual progress of the ascetic in the spiritual practices. This progress depends on God alone and on our faithful coöperation; to whom much has been given, of him much shall be required; and the book admonishes expressly, to allow grace alone to work, to

allow no entrance to human counsel, human exhortations or pressure, to let the soul alone with its God. Man must do what he can; generously, and, so to say, liberally, he must offer himself to God, and allow God to do as He pleases with him. "Good Master, what shall I do?"¹ and, "Teach me to do thy will,"² this must be the prayer of the ascetic during the course of the Exercises.

Thus we find here anew the three great chapters of the spiritual life as the ancients distinguished them, when speaking of the three ways to perfection, namely, of the *purgative*, *illuminative* and *unitive*, not as if these were strictly different from one another, but simply to show what different duties the soul has on its road to God. They, who have already progressed, must never cease to weed out the cockle that continues to grow in them;³ the saints themselves have never ceased to weep over their sins. The old, sensual man must first die, before the new, spiritual man can prosper. To bring about this death is the mission of the *purgative* way;⁴ we must *conquer ourselves*. Now the soul can tread the *second* way; cleansed and free from sin, as also from affection to venial

¹ Mark. 10, 17.

² Ps. 142, 10.

³ Gregory the Great, Moral. V., c. 33.

⁴ Rom. 6, 11. ; John. 12, 24. 25.

sin, more and more loosened from sinful inclinations which confuse the soul, it receives ever richer and more resplendent light of grace, by which it itself becomes ever more full of light and pleasing to God; it opens its innermost recesses to the light from on high, as a flower opens its calyx after the night is over. But, in Christ has appeared to us the fulness of truth and grace; ¹ He is our model; after Him the soul must be formed, as the artist shapes the marble according to his ideal. ² Nothing acts so powerfully to transform us into the image of Christ, to incite us to imitate Him, as the meditations on His life and passion. And therefore these form the principal feature of the Exercises. Everything else, however, world and life, science and nature, fortune and misfortune, our weaknesses even and our sins ³ serve to bring us closer to the Crucified. And so the soul steps into the *third* way, the *unitive*, by the perfect love of God and complete subjection to His will; here the soul, espoused to Jesus, finds its rest. Now the prophecy has come true: I will espouse thee to me in love, I will espouse thee to me in truth, I will espouse thee to me for ever. ⁴

¹ John 1, 14.

² 1 Cor. 15, 49.

³ Thomas, Summa III., q. 89, a. 2 ad 1.

⁴ Os. 2, 19.

This, my young friend, forms the contents and spirit of the Spiritual Exercises. Limited to a few days or weeks, they comprise, as the mustard seed does the tree, the mission and office of our whole life. And as nature, though occupied in its grandest creations, does not neglect to be active also in the smallest blade of grass, so likewise the soul, already seated on the highest step of the spiritual life does not neglect to return to the exercises of the first and second stage, always renewing itself, always trying to teach itself.

Therefore the Spiritual Exercises are placed at the beginning of the scholastic year; therefore the priest renews them every year, and at every important period of his life.

You are as yet quite young, my friend; surely you have often asked yourself, and not without fear: How will my life be, how will my end be? I know, outside of the divine mercy, which gives us grace to persevere unto the end, I know of no surer pledge of our eternal salvation, than the annual renewal of our soul in retreat. As fire it cleanses our soul from all impurities, that may adhere to it; as a cry from eternity, it arouses the soul when it begins to fall asleep; and with a supernatural light, which no one can escape, it illumines the remotest recesses of our

hearts, so that we may behold our wounds, and see where an operation is necessary.¹ Thank the great God whenever He gives you the grace to make a retreat, to enter those days of solitude and silence, where the Holy Ghost speaks to your soul, those days, the happiest of your life, those days the most important and decisive for all eternity.



¹ Bern., De consid. I., 7.



LETTER XV.

The Study of Theology.

In my last letters I showed you the importance of the seminary for the future priest; I described its office, the virtues which the student should acquire there, and the Spiritual Exercises which should form the entrance into it. I repeatedly told you: it is not the high walls separating the clerical student from the outside world, that bring salvation; where the heart is not in seclusion, it remains, although very strictly isolated exteriorly, a dusty highway, on which the world with its pleasures and its vanity and all its passions constantly moves; nay, just in *sōlitude* the imagination becomes vivid, and paints the pictures and forms of this world in the more beautiful colors, the less it is chained down by bitter reality; the *potestates tenebrarum harum* penetrate through closed doors and climb over the highest walls.

Therefore prayer and meditation must lead the clerical student into the *solitude of the soul*; quiet should reign within him, a holy silence must enter there; the noise of the market-place and the voices of worldly traffic

must no longer penetrate into his soul; everything in him must be still, so that God alone may speak. Now only is the soul capable to think great, eternal thoughts; now there begins that holy sabbath-rest, which is the foretaste of that peace, which will one day be ours, when the form of this world shall have passed away and the day of eternity dawned.

This is what we have considered in my last letters. *Oratio, meditatio faciunt theologum.* A third must yet be added — *humiliatio*. The heart is unsearchable, who can know it?¹ A thousand times it may realize its own blindness, its ignorance, its mistakes, but it rebels as soon as another wishes to guide it, it revolts against its guide. A thousand times it has experienced, that which it despises to-day, it had longed for yesterday, that it esteems not to-day, what it will strive for to-morrow. And nevertheless it so stubbornly wishes to have its own way. If it does not place itself into the hands of a superior, of one well-experienced, and loving it with a father's heart, for him to guide it prudently, it will creep, as a vine, along the ground, a plaything of the winds, soiled by the dirt. *The hand of the superior is the staff*, up which it must climb; then it will imbibe clear, warm sun-

¹ Jerem. 17, 9

shine, then it will grow and blossom and yield fruit. It is the whims of our ever-changing, restless heart, that trouble us and make us unhappy, and very often throw us off of our course. It is the strong, steadfast, unwavering and unchangeable will of a guide, it is law and order on which our own will must lean and cling to, in order to wax strong. Then rule and law imprint themselves deeper in the soul; our will unites itself intimately with them, and, so to say, becomes one with them; our whims, the fruit of a moment, step back; our will alone, rational, strong, and directed to a certain end, becomes then the moving principle of our inner life. And thus, in the school of subjection and obedience, a character is formed, an earnest, manful, sacerdotal character, which does not compromise with the powers of the day, a character, to which the words of the great Florentine may be applied:

Be as a tower, firmly set,
Shakes not its top for any blast that
blows!

He, in whose bosom thought on
thought shoots out
Still of his aim is wide, in that the
one

Sicklies and wastes to nought the
other's strength. ¹

¹ Purgat. V., 14.

True, it is a hard road, the road of self-humiliation, of self-denial, of obedience; but there is not another, on which to become a strong man, an ever-ready champion of God. Therefore the words of Herodotus are true, even up to the present day: There are many people, but few men.

To accomplish this in the clerical student is the office of the *seminary*. For only so is he prepared and enabled to drink in sacred science. This science can enter only into a pure soul; wisdom will not enter into an evil one.¹ Theology is a sacred science, sacred in its origin, its end, its contents — God and the world, the latter viewed in the light of God and in its relation to God, *sub specie aeterni*.² Theology is wisdom, and why? We have spoken on this subject before. All truth comes from God, God is truth. All sciences in the various fields of human knowledge, the science of the intellect and of nature, philology and history, ethics and jurisprudence — what are they but the different ways the human intellect takes, in order to know divine truth, which, coming forth from every part of creation, shines upon man, from the atom of dust up to the planets, that circle around the sun? Theology does not consider

¹ Wisd. 1, 4.

² Thomas, *Summa I.*, q. 1, a. 7.

itself a stranger to these sciences, it honors detailed investigation, it admires the progress made in the different branches, it sees in the results attained an explanation, a confirmation of its own doctrines.¹ It views them all in their relation to God and to the ultimate end of all things. Knowledge of special branches makes the scientist; but he, who encompasses the *whole*, the beginning and the end, the origin and the goal, such a one acquires *wisdom*.²

Thus you see, my young friend, how closely united are the ascetic and the scientific education of the priest. Meditation and study, seminary and college are sisters, born of the *same* father, and tending to the *same* end: — God's glory and the salvation of men. The wisdom of the Church has cultivated both of them from the beginning, although under different forms; both have been taken care of by her; as conditions for her activity among the nations, she has guarded them as the pupil of her eye; in both she finds a pledge of a happy future, the security for a worthy, Catholic priesthood, penetrated by her spirit.

We have already spoken of the object of the seminary; now I am going to show you the *necessity, essence, grasp and method* of

¹ Thom., Sum. I., q. 1 a. 5 ad 2.

² Thom. Sum. I., a. 1, a. 6.

theological science. Before we enter upon this subject, it may be prudent for the protection of science to look at the words of the apostle, which the simple-minded allege and the slothful use as a pretext. It would not be necessary to do so on your account; I should need only to address to you the words that Virgil spoke to his client:

Come after me, and to their babblings
leave

The crowd.¹

I ought rather restrain your zeal for science, than urge it on; but, for the sake of the weak-minded, a remark here will not be deemed superfluous.

Knowledge puffeth up,² says the apostle. It is often only envy that speaks so. Albert the Great says of them: “Vellent enim ut omnes in insecitia torpescant, ne soli torpescere videantur,” and St. Gregory of Nazianzum: “Knowledge is not a small good as some think; but because they have none they wish that others were like themselves, so that their own ignorance would not be so apparent.”³ There is a proletariat that hates the intellectually rich, more than the poor do the rich; but this can be found only among uncivilized, plebeian natures, or among those favorites of

¹ Dante, *Purg.* V., 13.

² 1 Cor. 8, 1.

³ *Orat.* XLIII., in *Basil.* c. 11.

Dame Fortune, who awoke some fine morning with position, title of nobility and favors heaped upon them, or who have received everything they have from some friend. Science, knowledge alone cannot be given, as favors and gifts are. But enough of this.

Knowledge puffeth up. The apostle speaks, as I have already remarked, of that false, one-sided gnosis, which sees in the great mysteries of our faith, in the grand facts of the redemption, a vain play of thoughts only, a dialectic exercise for indolent minds, a following of devised fables,¹ nothing but an object for a subtile, querulous mind, but not the word from the cross, which brings salvation and consolation, and is to all the wearied and the burdened a refreshment. He, whom knowledge puffeth up, *never had knowledge*, he never had true, real knowledge. It is the man of knowledge, who first of all admits the *insufficiency of human research*; the further he progresses in the field of knowledge, the more does this field expand before his eyes. He, who is proud of the little he has learned, and becomes puffed up, is evidently like to the sparrow, who imagines the little yard in which he hops around to be the whole world, and knows not how the eagle feels who sees farther, the higher he ascends. He, whom

¹ 2 Pet. 1, 16.

knowledge puffs up, *has no heart*; for every truth, which the mind understands, reveals God in His immensurable majesty and greatness; every fact of revelation, every feature in the life of the Lord manifests to the soul His unintelligible goodness and mercy. Then man, of his accord, falls down on his knees and humbles himself before the infinitely great, infinitely merciful God. The Holy Ghost says: *Multitudo sapientium sanitas est orbis terrarum.* ¹

And for this very reason, since sacred science is so great a thing, since it has such a high and holy mission under the gospel, since, to use a saying of St. Augustine² it “generates, nourishes, defends and confirms highly salutary faith,” the Church has given to the adepts in sacred science an honorary place in her *worship*. In the ‘Commune Doctorum’ the Church honors these masters of science of all ages, and thereby her own self. Not without cause does the poet of the ‘Divine Comedy’ place the great theologians in the sphere of the sun; from them, to be sure, must proceed light and warmth over the world of the intellect, as the visible, material sun casts his rays over the physical world. This he had learned from St. Thomas. For our

¹ Wisd. 6, 26.

² Trinit. XIV., 1. n. 3.

312 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

theology here on earth is nothing else than an image of the theology in heaven, by which God knows Himself, in which the blessed participate in different measures and degrees.

Therefore, what we have accomplished and striven for in sacred theology will not be in vain after we have gone from this world. The habits of the moral virtues, of the natural and acquired, as of the supernatural and infused, remain as an ornament to our souls in the life beyond the grave; the purity of an Aloysius, the love of a Teresa, the zeal for souls of an apostle, all this remains in heaven, although there will be no more temptations to conquer, no more souls to win. The habits of the intellectual virtues likewise remain; the great Fathers and Doctors of the Church, eminent by their penetrating gaze, their rich, intellectual treasures in the science of salvation, stand as such before God's throne. To be sure, these moral and intellectual habits form a part of our individuality, without which *we should not be ourselves*. An Augustine, a Thomas of Aquin are blessed in heaven in the vision of God; but also a holy virgin martyr Agnes, a holy maid Nothburga are blessed. These souls were differently endowed here on earth, and remain so in eternity; the former are the

souls of great theologians, the latter the souls of humble virgins. And in this exactly consists *their* particular beatitude. What they were, what they have done, suffered, this remains to them; all imperfections alone, from which no one is free here on earth without a special grace, or those imperfections, that are incompatible with the beatific vision, are removed. Faith is changed into vision, hope into possession; but love remains, it is the greatest of the three. The martyr does not forget his agony, nor the virgin, that on earth she had chosen the Lord as her spouse, nor the theologian, what insights he had into the depths and harmonies of the divine truth.

And therefore there is prepared for these three, martyrs, virgins, doctors, a special halo beside the crown of justification common to all the blessed. They who have conquered the world, receive the palm of *martyrs*; ¹ to those who have conquered the flesh is given to sing the canticle which only *virgins* are permitted to sing; ² and they that have *instructed* many to *justice*, will shine as stars for all eternity. ³

In my former letters I have outlined the office and essence of theology. The school

¹ Apoc. 7, 9.

² Apoc. 14, 3.

³ Dan. 12, 3.

has defined it as the science treating of God and divine things, but not merely by the light of natural reason by which man knows God; it draws its principles from the revelation made known to us by Christ, which has been confirmed, preserved and explained by the Church. It is then the science *of* faith and *from* faith; but it does not therefore *exclude* reason, but *includes* it.

From hence are drawn very important conclusions for us; the ancients already indicated them; for us they have a still greater importance. Can he who is not a Catholic, not a thorough Catholic, be a theologian? We answer emphatically: no. Because such a one cannot make an act of faith; he cannot be theologically convinced, but only naturally, whilst theological conviction brings about a greater certainty by reason of the certainty of faith. What I have just said is evident. No one can teach aesthetics, who has not a knowledge of the beauties of nature and of artistic forms; no one can judge works of music, who has no idea of harmony and music. Thus, in questions of faith, the *faithful theologians* alone can judge. Thanks be to God, at present it is no longer necessary, as it was in the days of the so-called enlightenment, to warn the students of the poison of doubt and anti-ecclesiastical doctrines, which

were at that time sown broadcast even from Catholic professorial chairs. And should there yet be found, to the sorrow of the Church, such a teacher, avoid him, my dear Timothy, as you would a person attacked with leprosy; his very breath will poison you.

Some may ask, is theology really a *science*, if it is based on faith; is there such a thing as a science of faith? If we, with a cursory glance only, look over the various branches which theology comprises, the answer is already given. Linguistic studies, archaeology, historico-critical researches, are more or less auxiliary branches of theology. It is perfectly correct, theology does not proceed from *a priori* known principles, or from principles evident in and by themselves. But if our knowledge were science under this condition only, no other disciplines outside of mathematics, could lay claim to the title; neither natural, nor historical, nor juridical science are endowed with this character, but proceed from and are based on experience. We may also admit, and that freely, that theology is not an exact science, since it does not prove its theses by mathematical formulas. But this it has in common with other sciences; metaphysics, ethics, jurisprudence and history do not present their results in an exact form; natural science itself has fields, as for instance

316 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

that of comparative anatomy, where mathematics is not made use of, where the conclusions, arrived at by analogy and induction, give the result. And besides, my dear Timothy, do not let yourself be blinded by the term, exact science. Could the intellectual sciences be treated exactly, *they would cease to be intellectual sciences*; for only that can be treated exactly, according to mathematical formulas, which can be counted and measured, *such as matter*. The life of the spirit and of liberty stands beyond space and figures. Therefore the method of the intellectual sciences must be a different one; by this it shows its preëminence; it does not constitute a defect.

In a more restricted sense also, theology, as the representation of the system of revealed truths, is a science. It starts from indubitable, certain principles, develops them further by rational media, and thereby builds up an edifice of learning, standing by itself, and organically united. True, its highest principles are not in and by themselves evident; these principles are based on experience, as is the case in many of the above-mentioned sciences, but not on sensible experience, nor on natural, nor purely rational experience, but on experience acquired by revelation. To prove that this experience is based on truth

and reality, so that it makes us certain of facts, as certain as the facts of history and the testimony of ages, which have not only subjective, but the most objective importance, is the office of *fundamental theology*, as we shall see in a forthcoming letter.



LETTER XVI.

The Study of Theology.

(Conclusion.)

If you ask me, my young friend, what *method* to follow in your studies, I should tell you to follow the one that suits you; I wish only to warn you against being too exclusive, by wishing to make use of one method, to the utter exclusion of all others. St. Thomas already remarked, that the method and the matter of a science are not one and the same, that, nevertheless the method must depend on the matter under consideration; method is also closely connected with the intellectual current of the time and its wants. The Fathers, early Scholasticism, the masters who followed, the Wolffian school, and the moderns have treated theology by different methods. None has absolute authority, each more or less only, since this depends on the particular subject treated. An unconditional adhesion to scholasticism or patristic theology is not according to the spirit of the Church, whose life is not limited either to a certain time or period of development; and still less is the doing away with the traditions of antiquity

according to her spirit. J. Kleutgen, in his "Theologie der Vorzeit," a book worthy to be read, has successfully saved the honor of tradition, and, at the same time, shown the danger of discarding it. I need not warn you against following the method of Kant and Schelling, which since their time has also crept into Catholic theology. It has judged itself. It called itself the philosophical method, not surmising at all what irony and humiliation lay in the term. It surrendered itself to the dictates of the philosophy of the day — Kant, Schelling, Schleiermacher, etc. — and the demonstration it sought was simply the explanation, how its own assertions agreed with those of the philosophy just then in vogue. At present we note the same procedure among the Protestants v. g., in A. Biedermann, who transferred Hegelianism, in R. Lipsius, who transplanted Kantian scepticism, and in A. Ritschl, who brought Kantian moralism into theology, and whose school now predominates in Protestant theology. It is to be wondered at, that none of these ever dreamed of reverting the relation, and proving, that, what Schelling, Hegel and others taught, was long ago contained in the Christian system of faith; they would then have given to theology a greater dignity, and not made of it a servant of philosophy, which lives by the grace of her mistress.

The *terminology* of our ancient theology has been censured and even ridiculed. How are you to judge in the matter? Listen to the words of an impartial judge, J. G. Herder: ¹ “In the controversy, whether learned terminology is to be banished from theology, it should only be asked, from which theology is this to be done? This *should* not be done in acroamatic theology, otherwise it would be forced to *invent* a new terminology, if it would wish to remain a clear science. Much less should it disappear from the *history* of dogmatic theology, for here they are *res facti*, which we may forget, or not know, or never have learned but which will nevertheless remain what they are in the book of time, nay, to which often the genesis and form of our theology is closely attached; that they may and should be omitted in sermons and in catechetical instruction who would wish to doubt?” And so it is; we should be obliged to invent a new terminology; and as many have tried to do so in modern philosophy since the days of Kant, so unfortunately some Catholic theologians have done to the detriment of course of their scholars and of our science; and, at the same time, they exposed themselves to the danger

¹ Briefe, das Studium der Theologie betreffend. (Sämmtliche Werke. Zur Religion und Theologie IX., Tübingen 1808, p. 370.)

of voicing ambiguous and even erroneous views. To try to shine with novel words and queer phrases shows a narrow mind and is a mark of a poor intellect and of but little true education. The man of science does not try to shine by paradoxes; he who uses them, may before an uneducated crowd gain a momentary reputation. The words, method, the whole being of a truly learned man are simple and unsought for, but his thoughts are deep and grand. “Andava, come le altre,” says Facchetti, the biographer of Catherine of Siena. In her exterior she differed not from the other maids of Florence, but how high was she not above them in her whole being! The same can be said of the great men of science; and the biographers of St. Thomas relate similar things of him. St. Thomas did not wish to announce a new doctrine, or to establish a new system, or to coin new words, or to establish a new school; he had no other intention than to place before us the ancient Catholic doctrine.

We find the exactly opposite conduct among those who laid the foundation of new sects. It is an unhealthy passion, an unjustifiable imitation of the teachers of other sciences, especially those of the natural sciences, when theologians also wish to invent novel ideas and go in search of them. *Nove, sed non nova,*

must always remain our axiom. Theology is always new, yet remains old, as old as God Himself; our office can be no other than to delve always deeper into its depths, to be always enriched by it. St. Augustine¹ says: "Nobis ad certam regulam loqui fas est, ne verborum licentia etiam de rebus, quae his significantur, impiam gignat opinionem." The terminology of every science, and above all of theology, is conditioned by its whole development; for there exists such an intimate union between word and thought, that they may be termed twins, born of the intellect by a single inspiration. Therefore we can hardly part with the word and still retain the thought. Furthermore, they are not words that were accidentally coined by some individual; they sprang from the spirit of the great theological schools, and have thereby received a certain consecration; they have passed the criticism of the deepest thinkers, and have been found to be most correct and significant, least exposed to be misunderstood, and the best adapted expression of theological thought. It would be a sign of littleness and purism not worthy of an educated man, to wish to abolish them, because they were not taken from the vernacular; they do not form the language of the ordinary man, but of the

¹ De civit. Dei X., 23.

educated. Goethe already said, that we have no patriotic art, no national science; both belong to the universe, as everything else which is eminently good. Furthermore, it would be impossible to render them in the vernacular, and were it possible, much would still be wanting, before they would become common property. We should be obliged to renounce understanding one another. And again, where exact terminology stops, there the world of phraseology begins; and this is the deathknell of all science. It ossifies, as Goethe once said, the organs of the understanding, and is the result, and at the same time, the cause of semi-education.

Another point I should like to impress upon you, is *confidence* in your teachers. This is the surest pledge of a happy success in your theological studies. Surely, they well know the importance of their office; they too know that the youths who come to listen to their lectures, are in their best, most beautiful, most fertile and decisive years; they regard their calling as a holy one, by which they may influence the mind and heart of their pupils. They know too for how much a teacher may be grateful to a diligent scholar. The knowledge-seeking eye of the pupil acts incitingly on the mind of the teacher and brings to life there many a thought. The

pagan himself already recognized, how much child-like confidence toward the teacher encourages study. Quintilian¹ says: "This one advice I shall give to scholars, that they love the teacher, no less than their studies. Then they will gladly be attentive, and believe the teacher, and seek to become like to him; they will gladly come to school, not get provoked at the teacher's corrections, be eager of praise, and by their diligence try to merit the especial love of their teachers. As we should in vain sow seed, if the well-plowed earth did not cause it to grow, so also instruction will not prosper, if teacher and scholar do not coöperate." Furthermore your teachers are Catholic men, all united in one faith, all borne aloft by the same Catholic spirit, all bent upon giving you the whole doctrine of the Church. You will not have to fear the fatal lot of so many young Protestant theologians, to whom theological instruction has been the rock, on which their faith was ship-wrecked. You will not have to suffer the intellectual torture, that, what is taught by the one professor, will be denied by another. Of late they tried to justify such conditions, saying, that science demands, that no doubt, no objection be spared the young theologian. He must, they say, descend into every depth of negative

¹ Instit. orat. II., 9 n. 1-3.

criticism, and look over all the abysses of negation. This may be true as regards him who has already made great progress in science, but it cannot be justifiable for the beginner. And even then, who would wish to let an inexperienced tourist go alone and without a guide, over steep cliffs and deep chasms, over deceptive snow-plains and hidden glacier-cracks? Thus the young theologian also needs the sturdy hand of a guide, whose watchful eye is able to scan the danger, whose strong hand will be capable to hold him when he becomes dizzy, looking into the deep chasm beneath.

In the many years of my position as professor and educator of theological youth, I have not yet experienced, that faithful confidence in the teacher makes the pupil less ambitious, or less inclined to be self-active, or less able. The 'ipse dixit' has no application in the Catholic theologian. What is announced to the pupil by the professor, is not the teacher's own word; it is the word of the Church, and therefore the pupil may confidently rely on the teacher, as a tourist does on an expert guide. It is not the result of human research only, it rests on the immovable ground of truth, which God Himself has revealed to us; it is as transparent and as hard as diamond, so that it cannot be attacked by

the file, the corroding poison of doubt. It does not belong to those 'opinionum commenta,' of which Cicero speaks, of which Protestant theology shows so many examples, which are destroyed by the action of time; it remains, as God, Who is its father, remains.

Yes, my young friend, confide in your teachers! Life only can beget life, and the intellect can be inflamed only by the intellect; your heart will be warmed by the beating of the teacher's warm heart, and touched by his words; then you will be filled with respect, gratitude and love; the vocation in which you are advancing is visibly exemplified in the teacher's and his example engenders in you the longing to become like to him. St. Jerome already remarked, that the living word of the teacher has a secret power, and most effectfully penetrates to the heart of the scholar, when coming directly from his mouth.¹ You may compile a number of notes, dead wisdom, from books, but life alone creates life. To be sure, you see in your teachers what there is ennobling and consoling and beatifying in sacred science, when united with the intellect, when it fills the heart of man, when it has become the center of our thoughts and desires, when it

¹ Jerome: Ep. LIII., ad Paul. c. 2.

has become one's whole life. The profane sciences cannot bring about such results, even when great results are attained. They do not even tell us, as A. v. Humboldt declared despairingly, "why we really exist."

Confide in your teachers in the spirit of the Church, and you will never become the slave of man. Your teachers have always regarded your vocation as what it in reality is, the most beautiful, the most ennobling, the most important form of the care of souls. Your science does not serve only for the necessities of daily life, nor to render this life more pleasant, but it aims at *saving souls*. Your teachers esteem your vocation so highly, that they teach you only the best of what they themselves have acquired. And not only this. They also tell you of their experiences in the struggle of their lives, what has been revealed to them in hours of suffering, they relate to you the insights they have had in the kingdom of God, in fact, everything that moves, elevates and inspires a Catholic heart. Sooner or later your professors will descend into the grave; but the intellectual world, the world of faith, of Catholic science, into which they have led you, will not pass away; the love of Holy Church, which they have enkindled in your heart, will not die out; the higher, spiritual, scientific and

priestly life, which you have seen exemplified in their life, will not vanish. In their love, full of faith, they had an anticipation of the theology of heaven; as long therefore as theology remains the object of your thoughts and of the love of your mind, so long also will you kindly remember your teachers.

It is not the person of the teacher that occupies us, but the welfare of the scholar himself. The beginning of all knowledge is to be found in the authority of the teacher, in whom we confide. "It is the order of nature," says St. Augustine, "that authority precedes, when we are about to learn, and then follows the inner intelligence."¹ Nay, even at the present day, when all complain of the want of piety, it is regarded as an especial recommendation, even in the profane sciences, to have been the scholar of a celebrated professor. In the field of theology too we are accustomed to speak of different schools, not, however, with the meaning that modern Protestants attach to the term; for with them it signifies not only a different method, a different plan of explaining the Christian truths, but another faith, another Christianity. It is quite otherwise in the Catholic schools. In the first centuries they distinguished between the Alexandrian and

¹ De mor. Eccl. cath. I., 2.

the Antiochian school, because the former emphasized more the allegorical, the latter the grammatico-historical sense of biblical exegesis; the one followed more closely the philosophy of Plato, the other that of Aristotle; during the Middle Ages the Scotists taught alongside of the Thomists. Differing in many questions, they all nevertheless stood on the ground of the one faith.

Be convinced of this, my young friend, that, with very few exceptions, he cannot become great, who has not passed through the schools, who has not been disciplined in the school of the intellect, who has not been introduced into science by the live word of a teacher. And even there, where with a remarkable talent, one thinks himself able to dispense with the schools, still some defect will be visible. Knowledge remains faulty, the aim becomes partial, not taking into account that such a self-made man is easily deceived by himself as to the imperfection of his knowledge.

As a rule there is little gain, where discipline is wanting, and the mind relies on itself. What Montaigne says of himself, applies to all. "When I was yet kept busy with the occupations of my office, I wished, since I was free from restraint, to occupy myself with study. But the contrary occurred; as a horse, having

330 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

no one to carry and being unrestrained, romps about without getting any farther, thus was I occupied all day long unsystematically, and at last was obliged to confess, that I had accomplished nothing." Such persons traverse all branches of science, they go in every direction, pilfer from every book, try everything, begin many things and drop them as soon as they meet with difficulties; they approach nothing in earnest, they finish nothing patiently and perseveringly. Where there is no depth, there is no science. And for this reason discipline in learning is a highly important *moral* factor. There is surely enough talent distributed over the world, and nevertheless we find so much shallowness, and superficiality, and phraseology. Why? Many are wanting in an earnest endeavor; an ancient adage runs thus:

Nil sine magno labore
Vita dedit mortalibus.

Yes, my young friend, in the recollection of mind, in an earnest endeavor, in a conscientious exertion of all our faculties, which is impossible without self-renunciation and self-denial, especially in the beginning, the *ascetic* education of a young theologian gives testimony of itself as being in harmony with an intellectual education. Thereon rests all blessing for a young man, therefrom de-

pende his inner peace; a young theologian derives therefrom a certain dignity as also a security for a happy future. Read and ponder over the words of St. Augustine in his book "*De doctrina christiana*," c. 7, 2nd book, as also the 29th and 39th discourses of St. Gregory of Nazianzum, surnamed "*the Theologian*," and you will find out the necessary union existing between ascetic and scientific culture.

Let me add only a few remarks. Read little, of all branches only the best, then try to fully comprehend what you read and to make it your own. It is an ancient axiom, but not therefore antiquated: *Timeo lectorem unius libri*; St. Augustine, the great St. Augustine said this, he from whose works, as from an inexhaustible ocean of science, we all nourish and enrich our minds. For this reason the ancients were so great, so rich in ideas; but we have been intellectually impoverished by the multitude of books. Superficiality, obscurity, vagueness are the necessary results of unmethodical reading, which, carried on hurriedly, presents to our minds a confused aggregation of ideas, brings about mental fatigue and weariness, weighs our memory down with unnecessary ballast, if it does not produce the dire result of creating a vacuum in our minds. It were

best for you, especially in the first terms, not to read anything, or hardly anything besides your textbooks. Read them, read them repeatedly, ponder over them, convert them into your very flesh and blood, impress much of them on your memory by constantly reading them. Attend diligently the *disputations*; they are the best arena for the mind; they exercise your acumen, they sharpen your judgment, they are a school of strict logic and lead you to examine the subject from all sides and to penetrate it to the core. Thus you can acquire a sound basis for your whole scientific future.

When attending the lectures of your professor or reading a book, do so only *with pen in hand*. Thus your attention is kept awake. "Nil legit, quod non excerperet," says Pliny the Younger of his uncle. Thus you will derive a threefold benefit. You will then read only such books as are worthy to be copied, and therefore only good ones; you will listen and read with greater attention because you will endeavor to render what you read or hear, correctly, clearly and concisely, and will thus see, whether you have understood it well; and again, by so doing, your intellect will be sharpened, your judgment made more solid, and your memory enriched. "Excerpts," says Herder, "are the cells, in

which the bees prepare the honey." Read only the works of *Catholic* authors. The number of non-Catholic works is legion, and their name is Babel, and no one understands the language of his neighbor. The laws of the Index have a deep psychological meaning. And even if you had not to fear doubts in matters of faith, are you sure, that your heart will not be disquieted, that it will not lose its happiness, its peace? Is your heart really surrounded by a triple armor, that it will not be wounded by the words of the enemies of Christ and His Church? Or do you think, you must know all the objections brought against the Church, and that you must therefore read them? This might have been the case two or three hundred years ago, when there was yet something like a common system of faith among Protestants, and therefore their objections were all alike, or nearly so. This has changed completely; among Protestants you will hardly find two learned theologians who agree in their doctrine; everyone has his own system, his own "theology"; there are some who deny all supernatural ideas, and these again separate into many branches, and there are others, who, at least in the main, adhere to the symbolical books. Therefore it is useless to wish to refute the objections made by the dif-

ferent representatives of Protestantism; that would be a struggle with the Lernean serpent; as soon as one objection is answered ten others arise in its place, and each day and book bring others. And therefore it has often pained me to see some professors of theology waste their time in speaking elaborately on the development of the philosophical systems of the day, on the latest objections of Protestant theologians, on the current hypothesis of destructive biblical exegesis. Their opinions of to-day are forgotten to-morrow, and are enclosed in the big charnel-house of human errors, which form only an object of curiosity and of pity. They themselves labor diligently to have them forgotten by bringing up new opinions and thus refuting themselves. Hege-sippus,¹ St. Iraeneus² and St. Hilary³ point out how wavering the heretics are in their opinions, and how they contradict themselves, so much so, that by disputing among themselves, they confirm the truth of our faith.⁴ The time of study for our young theologians is much too short to waste it in such excursions; he, who knows the Catholic system of faith thoroughly in its strictly-bound universality, in its consistent development, in its in-

¹ In Euseb., Hist. eccl. IV., 22, 5.

² Adv. haeret. V., 20, 1.

³ Tract. in Ps. I., 3.

⁴ Hilar. De Trin. VII., 4.

dissoluble union, where one thing supposes the other, and one rests on the other, is armed against all attacks, and with the aid of some reflection, will easily be able to refute them. *Mole stat sua.*

There is still another reason, why I would warn you not to read anti-Catholic books. *Latet anguis in herba.* The openly expressed errors which they contain are the least dangerous; the greatest danger lies in the obscurity, partiality and falsehood of the principles announced in them, as also in the vague and even erroneous manner of expression, and in the false views, which are not directly and in themselves contrary to the Catholic faith, but only indirectly. Especially when we are young, doctrines are easily and deeply impressed on our minds, which are then later on, after careful scrutiny, found to be false, and then our progress consists mainly in casting aside and forgetting, what we at first considered to be true. A glance into some of the Catholic theological books of recent times will give sufficient evidence of this.

In counselling you thus, I do not wish to say that the Catholic theologian is to disregard the enemy's doctrine. This he must not do; but he should read only those most important systems, which characterize a period in the history of apostasy, and these only in

their fundamental principles. On the learned theologian of course, nevertheless, devolves the task, not at all pleasant, of being cognizant of the various theories advanced by Protestant theology; for the history of error is always an evidence of an erroneous principle and an indirect confirmation of our faith. And for this reason Bossuet wrote his "*Histoire des variations des églises protestantes*;" in my book "*The Crisis of Christianity*" I have tried to develop his thoughts up to the present time.

This constant change of opinions in Protestant theology contains a serious admonition also for Catholic theologians. "The longing for what is novel," says Leo XIII.¹ "has also, by force of example, infected Catholic minds, who, putting aside the heirloom of ancient wisdom, have preferred to invent novel theories, rather than perfect and develop the ancient truths; this is not acting prudently, nor has it benefitted science. For their manifold systems have a weak foundation, since they rest on the reputation and opinion of individual teachers, and therefore establish nothing solid, compact and lasting, but only an unsafe and superficial knowledge. True, theology should be fostered and illustrated by the help of various sciences; but above

¹ Encyc. "Aeterni Patris," d. 4. August 1879.

all it is requisite, that it be treated in the earnest and thorough manner of the scholastics, so that it may unite the power of revelation with that of reason, and so continue to be an *impregnable fortress* of faith." And therefore in like manner Gregory IX. in the year 1228 exhorted the professors of theology at the university of Paris, not to deviate from the path pursued by the Fathers, to avoid novel and profane expressions, and the opinions of a so-called science; some, attempting this, had lost their faith.

Pascal says: "The passion to say something novel, is the fertile mother of most errors." Hence St. Gregory of Nazianzum thus admonishes us: "Do not despise the traditional, hanker not after what is novel, in order to be admired by the vulgar."¹ This is a temptation for all, and also for the theologian; if he yields to it, he will more and more neglect and despise the ancient approved teachers and the decrees of the Church, in order to make room for his own thoughts. The first half of the nineteenth century, with few excellent exceptions, clearly showed what baneful results accrue from such a proceeding. The tree of theological science bore fruits not only immature, but often also poisonous. The most of the works

¹ Orat. XXXII., 26.

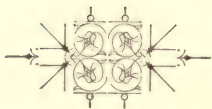
of this school remain now, covered with dust, in the libraries, and whoever takes the trouble to look over them, will find in them witnesses of the sad fate of those, who have left the "royal road" of tradition, as the Fathers¹ call it, to draw from the defective cisterns of worldly wisdom. And furthermore these works arouse in us a heartfelt pity for the men, who had devoted so much labor, diligence and time, perhaps their whole lives, to a phantom, to a pretentious, but false theology.

And now, my dear Timothy, I say to you: "*Macte nova virtute, puer, sic itur ad astra!*" "*Tanta est christianorum profunditas literarum,*" says St. Augustine,² "*ut in eis quotidie proficerem, si eas solas ab ineunte aetate usque ad decrepitam senectutem maximo otio, summo studio, meliore ingenio conarer addiscere.*" And if you become conscious of the insufficiency of your powers, if you reflect on how high and holy the office is, to which you aspire, how incomprehensible it is, so much so, that you have to conceive it with analogous ideas, how inexpressible the words which you speak, how full of mysteries the world, into which your mind is going to delve, then, with St. Thomas implore wisdom of Him, Who illumines the eyes of the blind

¹ Greg. Naz. Orat. XXXI.

² Ep. CXXXVII., Ad Volusian.

and makes eloquent the lips of the dumb. And if even the worldling Goethe says: "The hymn, *Veni, Creator Spiritus!* is the prayer of genius," we have more cause to turn to that Creator-Spirit, that He may abide in us; for we are not geniuses, and were we, nevertheless "the eyes of our intellect are blind, as the eyes of the night-owl are in daytime, blind when looking at the sun, blind, when looking at that, which in itself is the most luminous."¹



¹ Arist., *Metaphysics* II., 1, 3.

LETTER XVII.

Fundamental Theology.

In my last letter I spoke of theology as a science. I pointed to the different branches of knowledge it makes use of, not as if it absolutely needed them, but simply for a better explanation of its doctrine.¹ You have especially noticed its scientific character, since, starting from indubitably true and the highest principles, and illumined by the light of faith, it lays down the doctrines of revelation in plain and clearly defined terms, and because, by rational development, with the help of syllogisms, it deducts further knowledge (*conclusiones theologicae*) and thus establishes a uniform, organic system of Christian doctrine.

This scientific character of theology is especially apparent in *fundamental theology*, or apologetics. It proves the certainty of those higher principles, by placing before us the evidence of Christianity as being the absolute religion, revealed by God, visible in the Catholic Church, the only true Church; that this truth is announced in the Catholic

¹ Summa, I., q. 1, a. 5, ad 2.

Church, is preserved by her and communicated to all mankind. It forms the fundamental theological science, because it vindicates the foundation of Christian faith, the revealed word of God, as likewise the Church, the evangelist of this word, before the tribunal of reason. And since it develops the fundamental truths of Catholic Christianity, it cannot ignore the attacks made against it through the ages of its history, although these have been refuted by its Apologists. Thus fundamental theology necessarily merges into *apologetics*; for, vindicating Christianity by its highest and last principles, it repels the principles of antagonistic errors. The errors opposed to Christianity, are legion, nevertheless they proceed, more or less directly, from certain, uniform, false principles and theories.

Herein is to be found an explanation of a phenomenon in the latest history of theology, and especially of apologetics. It is a universally acknowledged and highly pleasant fact, that in the last decades, our theology has had diligent care bestowed upon it, and has given birth to splendid works; this can be explained by the increase of fervor in Catholic life, and especially by the fact, that we have realized the full meaning of the word 'Catholic,' and also because the union with the center

of the Church has become closer; and also because we have become conscious of a harmony with the great theologians of past times, and the researches of modern times have become penetrated with their spirit. The field of apologetics is at present more carefully and diligently cultivated than other fields; almost every year new and good works are brought to light. Since the cast of intellects is different in different men, and since the development of science and the current of expediency is subject to many changes, it should not cause surprise that the authors of scientific apologetical works have allowed themselves a certain liberty in demonstration. Thus one will treat minutely the philosophical preliminary questions, for our times lack to a great extent, not only a firm faith in the truths of Christianity, but also a well-proved conviction of universal religious-ethic truths, acknowledged even by the heathens and taught by eminent philosophers.¹ Since infidels have taken their weapons to combat Christianity, religion, ethics, human liberty and imputability, from the natural sciences, other apologists have paid special attention to the natural-scientific questions, in as far as they come in contact with intellectual

¹ H. Schell, *Die goettliche Wahrheit des Christenthums*, Paderborn 1895, meets this phase of the question.

science and religion.¹ In past centuries the repudiators of the divine character of the sacred books put the apologists to the task of vindicating for the Sacred Scriptures that dignity and authority, which they possess in our eyes, and of refuting the more important objections brought against them. Although theological science of modern times has invented a new branch, that of the 'Introduction to the Sacred Scriptures,' to counteract these charges, nevertheless the apologists cannot neglect this matter; you will therefore find them treating it more or less minutely.

Thus the essence and mission of fundamental theology calls for a certain manifoldness of demonstration, and it would be blameworthy to attempt to dictate to it a strictly limited range and a uniform method. If expediency calls for it, apologetics will be obliged to ask for the same liberty in the future, and perhaps for even more.

Thus matters stood especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, when Protestantism, still certain of the future and carried along by the favor of the mighty, rose up against the Church and caused many a Catholic heart to quake beneath the storms of persecution. There the duty became ap-

¹ Thus P. Schanz, *A Christian Apology*.

parent to vindicate, with all the means that science could offer, those doctrines against which the adversaries waged war. Apologetics was then a handbook of controversy; Becanus, Contzen and Bellarmin labored wonderfully in this field. At present, since Protestantism in its positive form has disappeared and split into many sects; since the ancient creeds have been done away with and the Scriptures themselves corrupted by negative criticism, the apologist will not be obliged to busy himself with it as much; he has now rather the duty to show forth the firm pillars of the divine edifice of the Church in their whole depth and strength, on which the waves of all heresies have always been broken.

It is likewise the office of the apologist, to present the Catholic faith in all its splendor and grandeur, in its universality and its wonderful course through history, in its blessed labor for the individual as well as for society, in the high ideals of life which it offers us, and in the excellent motives it affords us, together with all the great things it has performed in science, art, and the life of nations, — how it restrained the strong and defended the weak, how it encouraged and developed all noble genius in the heart of man, how it never repelled

anything worthy of man, but took all under its tutelage and breathed upon it the odor of eternity, and consecrated it; this is the most beautiful task of the apologist. Therefore Alexis deTocqueville says: "The restoration of the science of history is the restoration of Catholic greatness." Perhaps apologetics appears to be less scientific in form and method, but it nevertheless captivates the mind and goes to the heart. Yes, may the Catholic theologian strive enthusiastically to present to man his faith as much as possible in that splendor, in which the blessed in heaven behold it; then will the victorious power of conviction of the Catholic faith lead all men who have a heart and mind, thither, where alone they can hope to find eternal truth. "*Juvat hoc credere,*" they will be obliged to say with St. Ambrose, "*sperare delectat, non credidisse, poena est.*"

Christianity appeals to the whole man, it is not a purely scientific theory; it is life, not a mere school-wisdom; and therefore it is possible to write an apology on it from any point in the circumference with which it surrounds man and his development in time; it is possible to do so on every point of its doctrine, on every regulation of its ethics, on everyone of its institutions and formulas of worship and life. And, my dear Timothy, is not the

bloody heroism of the martyrs, the unbloody, but not less noble heroism of the thousands and thousands of victims of Christian charity, is not the drink of water, given out of love to the thirsty, the mite of the widow, the Sister of Charity who has offered herself to poverty, to the taking care of the foundling, to sufferings of all kinds, is not the life of the true Christian, and especially of the saints, an eloquent and convincing apology of the truth of Christianity? Apologetics will not overlook the least of these facts; it will incorporate them if only incidentally, into its system of scientific proof of the fundamental truths and facts of Christianity, from whence, because it is the center, all these things derive their importance. The proof of science is supplemented by the proof of life.

Apologetics, as the scientific proof of the Christian religion, stands at the boundary of the two great fields of science, — of natural cognition and of the supernatural; it therefore precedes faith, for it must first establish faith. The ancients called it therefore the *precursor of faith*; it aims at establishing reasonable faith, so that we may well become conscious of the reasons, wherefore we believe.¹ Truly, revelation goes beyond reason, especially in the fundamental teachings of the Church, but

¹ Rom. 12, 1.; Conc. Vat. De fid. cath. c. III can. 3.

it is not in the least antagonistic to it. It appeals to the rational mind; which should receive it, and by thinking reconcile it to itself. St. Augustine spoke significantly when he said: "Credere non possemus, nisi animas rationales haberemus."¹ "Faith is," as Pascal correctly remarks, "the highest act of reason." Why? As soon as the mind delves into the deep, it beholds abysses opening before it; the more it ponders over the mysteries of life, the more does it become conscious of the barriers raised against it. And thus this barrier, so painfully felt by even the greatest minds, becomes the portal, by which man enters into a higher region of truth, the region of faith. And thus the insufficiency, finiteness and faultiness of human knowledge becomes an exhorter, admonishing us to look about and see, whether the truth is not to be found in any other way, than by purely rational investigation.

Apologetics makes use of the results of philosophy; but where philosophy cannot answer the questions, apologetics gives a divine one. Religion is the last word in philosophy; you know this from Aristotle;² it is the keystone, the crown of the edifice of all human science; apologetics gratefully receives from philoso-

¹ Ep. CXX ad Consent. c. 1, 3.

² Metaph. VI., 1; XI., 7.

phy, but it gives back to it a higher certainty, richer contents, deeper sense, and above all, an infinitely higher aim.

And thus, my dear Timothy, fundamental theology preserves the dignity of theology and confirms its right of existence as a science.

Christianity is essentially *history*; from the beginning, with the origin of our race, it has entered into time as a divine fact, and has been incorporated, in an ascending series of revelations, into mankind; it has permeated it with a higher element of life and led it to the great epoch, when the Lord of salvation was made flesh and dwelt among us. Thus the proof of the institution and development of Christianity forms the most important duty of apologetics. It should, by means of historical criticism, examine the documents of revelation and prove their authenticity, and represent the Redeemer truthfully, in His supernatural greatness, in the splendor of His wonderful appearance as the fulfilment of the Old Covenant and the founder of the New, Who lives in His — the Catholic — Church until the end of time.

Hence fundamental theology is essentially the science of the fundamental facts and doctrines of the Christian religion as they are visible in the Catholic Church. An integral, although not an essential feature of it is *polemics*,

since positive proof also refutes error. Polemics is therefore only of secondary importance for apologetics; the words, "luce sua se signat" are especially true of Christianity; where it appears, there error vanishes, wherever human hearts beat. Therefore the apostles announced the gospel in simple speech, but with them it was a proof of the Spirit and of power. Where the heart of man closes its doors to the reign of grace and loves darkness and lies more than light, there Christianity will never have an entrance, and sophistry will always find new objections.

To these, my dear Timothy, apologetics should serve as a testimony of the truth, the "voice of one calling," although they will not listen, so that the word of God will not disappear from the face of the earth. Israel also despised the word of the Lord, but nevertheless He never ceased to teach, to exhort, to warn, to punish during His stay upon this earth; for He had come to give testimony to the truth.¹ This is also our duty. "This saying is hard,"² said many of the Lord's disciples, who measured His doctrine by the capacity of their carnal mind; and such has been said not seldom to the apologist. It has been requested, and some have heeded the re-

¹ John 18, 37.

² John 6, 61.

quest, to represent Christian truth only in general, not in its grandeur surpassing all sense and understanding, and to pass over the great sectarian differences, which have arisen during the past few centuries. Some hoped, in the interest of *peace*, to win the opponents by weakening the specifically Catholic teachings, and thereby to unite them with us in a common faith. This was a great deception. There never was and there is no Christianity outside of the Catholic Church; with her it first came into the world, by her it has ever been announced and imparted to the nations, by her it has been preserved in its entirety up to the present day, while outside of her, numberless sects have mutilated it. If we ask history, we shall learn, that it was not a Christianity formed according to the changing opinions of the day and the ever-mutable systems of the then existing philosophy, that with victorious sway held subject the hearts of men, but the full, whole, undiminished Catholic Christianity. Its supernatural mysterious contents may at first repel natural man and humiliate his understanding; but he, who dives deeper into it, and thus becomes conscious of the poverty and feebleness of his mind, who seeks salvation from misery, death and sin, will be attracted by it with supernatural power.

LETTER XVIII.

Dogmatic Theology.

Fundamental theology has proved the credibility of Christian revelation as it is visible and historically developed in the Catholic Church. Thus it has prepared the *ground* on which *dogmatic* theology is to build its edifice. Its office is to give us the contents of the Christian faith, proclaimed by the Church in her dogmas, and to prove these to be the true and unadulterated doctrines of Christianity. This is first of all done by the scientific demonstration of these doctrines from the fountains of revelation. In these we possess the word of God Himself, spoken to us,¹ and that directly and in its original form in the documents of the Sacred Scriptures, and again in an indirect form, communicated to us by the Church, in tradition. Both, the contents of the Scriptures and tradition, from our time back to the apostles, are facts, which we become aware of and prove by the documents of faith. And therefore, on account of this its office, which is at the same time its most necessary one, we call dogmatic theology a

(351)

¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. IV. Decr. de can. script.

positive science, as we call those sciences positive, that arrive at their conclusions by historical research. It is the basis and foundation for *speculative* theology. We do not call it speculative in the sense that rationalists use, who try to construe dogmas arbitrarily and according to the systems borrowed from contemporary philosophy, but we call it so in contrast with positive and practical theology, because it "further explains, proves, defends, shows the connection between the different truths, by which these themselves become clearer;"¹ and this it does with those dogmas that have already been demonstrated by the facts of revelation. Speculative theology likewise refutes heresies by clearly demonstrating the truths. Indeed, reason, illumined by faith, is incapable of proving dogmas by its own means, or to comprehend them; for, why should we need revelation, if it contained only such truths, as reason of itself could comprehend! It would be a revelation which reveals nothing, if it communicated to us only such truths, which man, by his natural powers had understood or were able to understand. And this, my young friend, must not be said, that after the revelation of dogmas has been made to us, it is now our

¹ Greg. de Valentia. Comm. theol. Tom. I., disp. 1, q. 1, punct. 1.

office to try to comprehend them fully. For then we should deny their absolutely supernatural and mysterious character.¹ Such an attempt, according to St. Thomas, would be fraught with a twofold evil: it would injure the dignity of faith, which shows us God and the divine things as in a mirror only and obscurely, and not face to face, and it alters faith, because it must necessarily lead to the mutilation of the doctrines of faith, if reason attempts to comprehend them.² Therefore positive dogmatic theology is the foundation and corner-stone of speculative theology. Hence St. Augustine³ says in the introduction to his subtile speculations on the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity: "First we must inquire of the *authority of the Sacred Scriptures* whether this be a dogma of faith."

From this you will see, my dear Timothy, that positive and speculative theology have one common root, namely revelation, that they tend to one common goal, namely, to represent the contents of faith correctly and

¹ Conc. Vat., De fide cath. c. 4: Nunquam (ratio fide illustrata) idonea redditur ad ea perspicienda instar veritatum, quae proprium ipsius objectum constituunt. Divina enim mysteria revelatione tradita et fide suscepta ipsius tamen fidei velamine contecta et quadam quasi caligine obvoluta maneant, quamdiu in hac mortali vita peregrinamur a Domino.

² St. Thomas, Summa I., q. 32, a. 1.

³ De Trinit. I., 2.

fully, and, as far as the human mind is capable, to communicate them to us rationally and to defend them. The history of theology tells us that both of these modes of teaching the faith were never totally separated; though the one at one time predominated, and the other at another time, until at the end of the last century the positive mode held exclusive sway; with the reaction of philosophy, however, speculation obtained a one-sided control, but not in the sense of the ancients. Were all and every speculation banished from dogmatic theology, it would be deprived of its scientific character; without the positive element, however, it would lose its hold, its certainty, the supernatural ground, upon which it rests. Its dignity as a science requires, that it give us plain, clearly defined terms, that it discern, order, and opportunely and distinctly group the contents of faith, that it prove every assertion made, and thus present an organic, well-arranged complete system of the Christian doctrines, which in its strictly combined unity, in the well-ordered symmetry of all its parts in a splendid intellectual edifice, is an image of the divine wisdom.

I have said that the doctrines of faith, as preserved and taught by the Catholic Church, are the subject of dogmatic theology. This

needs to be better defined. Those theses, which the Church solemnly defines as such especially by rejecting the contrary errors and anathematizing their upholders, are not the only truths of faith. Moreover, all that is to be considered as such, which is contained in the definitions *ex cathedra* of the popes and in those decrees of the councils in which their intention to teach the faith is clearly evident.¹ For this reason we must likewise regard those truths as dogmas of faith, and find proofs to sustain them, which the Church in her ordinary office as teacher has always taught and still teaches, be it directly and explicitly or indirectly, by reason, namely, of the dogmatic premises, which underlie her worship and discipline. Thus does the saying of Vincent of Lerins find its application: “Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est, hoc est vere proprieque catholicum.”² The Church exercises her office as teacher in different ways. Only when heresies spring up and danger of seduction threatens the faithful, she exercises her office extraordinarily; on these occasions she condemns them formally and solemnly by her dogmatic decision and judicial sentence. In an ordinary and continuous manner she teaches constantly the

¹ Conc. Vat. De fide cath. c. 3.

² Common. c. 2.

truth to the faithful, irrespectively of the rise of heresies. She appears at one time, as the shield and guard of the treasure of faith, warding off therefrom the robbery of heresy, at another, as a nursing mother, who feeds her children with the bread of truth. Strictly speaking this is self-evident; or, were not the great mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation dogmas of faith prior to the decrees of the Church condemning the Trinitarian and Christological heresies in the councils of Nice, Constantinople, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and the fifth and sixth of Constantinople? From the *common teachings* of the theological schools we know the doctrines of the Church, although they have not been proclaimed as dogmas of faith; for those theses, that are intimately connected with dogma, which the common and constant teaching of theologians approves of, pass into the ordinary teaching of the Church; in case of error the Church could not ignore, much less approve them.¹

¹ August. Ep. LV., 19: Ecclesia Dei, inter multam paleam multaque zizania constituta, multa tolerat, et tamen, quae sunt contra fidem et bonam vitam, non approbat, nec tacet, nec facit. — Melchior Canus, De locis theol. 1. VIII., c. 4, 3: Concordem omnium theologorum scholae de fide aut moribus sententiam contradicere, si haeresis non est, at haeresi proximum est Si qua in quaestione universi theologi eadem inter se concinunt, profecto, si in eo errant, Ecclesiam item errandi periculo exponunt. Sive enim, qui confessiones audiunt, sive qui ad

For what is the teaching office of the Church other than the instruction of the faithful by the universal teaching Church: pope, bishops and priests? Would not the promise made to the Church be at fault, if all the members of her teaching staff could announce, that a certain doctrine is divinely revealed, although not so revealed? By the common faith even of the Catholic laity, which rests upon the teaching office of the Church and is generated and guarded by it, St. Basil¹ was able in his time to refute the Macedonians, and St. Augustine² the Pelagians.

From what I have said so far, you will readily understand the nature and importance of theological censures. They pass judgment on doctrine that is opposed to Catholic faith or morality; according as these views are more or less opposed to Catholicity, the ecclesiastical *censure* is severe or mild. When the infallible ecclesiastical teacher has denounced such theories as erroneous, it is our duty to regard them as such, and the dogmatist must therefore repudiate them also in the sense in which the Church does, for by her censure

populum habent conciones, utrique plebem instituunt, ut a theologis acceperunt. Ita fit, ut Ecclesia eorum in fide communem errorem dissimulando Christi fideles suo silentio deciperet.

¹ De spiritu Sancto, c. 29.

² Contra Jul. I., 7.

she has enunciated a *judicium dogmaticum*. Only he, who has an utterly wrong idea of the office of theology, can see in this a bar to the progress of theological science. What then, my young friend, is the office of theology? Should it only propose the express doctrines of revelation, and not rather encompass and penetrate them; should it not rather more closely define them, develop conclusions from them, establish relations and applications for scientific knowledge and repudiate all those opinions, which, viewed in the light of revelation, are erroneous and hurtful to Catholic belief? Just in the solution of this problem theology is led by the teaching hand of the Church which, by her censures, not only guards and preserves intact the root of Christian knowledge, — dogma, but also its further developments and branches, more or less united with its doctrines.

Dogmatic theology, having thus established the object of faith, then proceeds to prove it by revelation, and, first of all, by the *Scriptures*. These take the first place in ascertaining the truths of salvation; for they not only *contain* the word of God as tradition does, but they *are* the word of God in its original and proper form, as written by the evangelists and apostles, and the

prophets of the Old Law, to last for all ages, so that we, in a certain sense, as Tertullian¹ and St. Augustine² say, hear them, through whom the Holy Ghost has spoken. Therefore the Scriptures can lay claim to an especial greatness, sanctity, dignity and force. They are of a fundamental and typical importance for the whole later development of the teaching office of the Church. And therefore positive dogmatic theology is of such great value, because it draws from the fountain of our faith itself, because it is thereby chiefly preserved from the errors of human sophistry, since it clings very tenaciously to the way our Lord and His apostles taught, and thus fills the dogmatist with that unction, with that spirit of holy awe and humble persevering faith, which he acquires by familiar intercourse with the Lord and His disciples. The importance ascribed to the Scriptures as the first and mediate rule of faith, explains a certain ancient saying, which, although it emphasizes the speculative side, loves to call theology the science of the Scriptures, and the learned theologian “doctor of the Scriptures.”

Since then the dogmatist takes his proofs from the Scriptures, his standing as a man

¹ De praescrip. c. 22.

² In Joan. tr. XXX., 1.

of science does not require of him that he ignore or question as doubtful the faith of the Church regarding a certain doctrine in order that he may proceed scientifically without premises. This was the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος* of *Hermesianism*, which was expressly and solemnly condemned already by Gregory XVI.,¹ and later on by the Vatican Council.² This claim rests upon the false presupposition, that the motives of credibility of revelation do not produce such a certainty as excludes all reasonable doubt, and furthermore, that a scientific method is not compatible with faith, and that the tie of unity, which holds fast the theologian to his Church, must first be severed. In this matter the office of the dogmatist is similar to that of the philosopher. He cannot wish to find and create the certainty of the first and necessary theoretical and practical truths in the natural order; they of their own accord announce themselves to the human mind, with an original and easily intelligible indubitable certainty, and he has only by reflection to make them his own, and to develop them, and more perfectly and clearly to become conscious of them. The same is applicable to the supernatural order; the dogmatist must

¹ Breve, d. 26 Sept. 1835.

² 1. c. c. 6.

not first prove the certainty of faith, — theology is, as we know, the science of faith and from faith, — but he must simply more widely develop and illustrate it. True, the scientific treatment of dogmatic theology calls for *methodic doubt*, which does not repudiate or call in question that which the dogmatist already believes, or endeavors by investigation to ascertain, but which simply strives to prove more thoroughly and illustrate more amply the facts, which he already firmly believes, and conclusively to refute the arguments of the adversaries. “Although, I believe this most steadfastly,” says St. Augustine in this connection, “nevertheless we will institute an investigation, as if it were not certain.”¹

What I have said is evident from the *very nature of the Scripture-proof* itself. It is the Church, from whom the Scriptures have gone forth, that preserves and explains them, and interprets their deeper meaning, on whose testimony alone we believe in their authenticity, integrity, credibility and inspiration with the certitude of faith; from whom in fact we have a holy Bible in the full sense of the word. Of what use are the Scriptures to the infidel? The devil himself can quote the Scriptures, says St. Jerome.² And, more-

¹ De lib. arbitr. II., 2.

² Dial. adv. Lucif. c. 28.

over, how can the dead letter awaken faith in us? No creature can do this, nor any created power, not even the sermon, but the power of the Holy Spirit alone, Who gives us supernatural life. But, by the dispensation of Providence, the Holy Ghost does not act immediately, but through the Church and through her living teaching office; to her, He has espoused Himself by a mysterious union; to the Church Christ has given His promises, and to her He has promised the Holy Ghost. And therefore scientific research alone will never generate a faithful conviction. "Where the Church is, there is the Holy Ghost, and all grace."¹

As to the manner of biblical argumentation, it cannot be too thorough; here is the point where exegesis reaches over into dogmatic theology, and prepares and analyses the arguments. A detailed demonstration by Scripture-proof has been attempted of late, and that, by a thorough development of the doctrinal contents of certain parts of the Bible, as of the Psalms, or of the authors of certain biblical books, as, e. g., of the epistles of St. Paul, of the teachings of St. John etc. Protestantism has often tried to bring biblical theology, the Pauline, Petrine and Johannite teachings into contrast with

¹ Ireneus, Adv. haer. III., 24, 1.

the dogmatic teachings of the Church, and has endeavored to extract from them proofs for its own hypotheses.

And even, if the dogmatist cannot go into the details of biblical proofs, he should, nevertheless, after having thoroughly examined them, adduce his arguments fully from the Scriptures. Therefore certain passages ought to be selected. He should not despise or pass over the *locos classicos*, as they have been handed down in the schools, he should rather insist on them. He may, however eliminate such matter, which has carelessly, or rather uncritically, been used regarding certain passages by one or the other author.¹

The argumentation from *tradition* closely follows that from Scripture. In it we recognize very truthfully the parable of the mustard-seed, which, put into the ground, grew to be a mighty tree, of whose fruit the nations may satisfy their hunger after truth. It is not sufficient for the scope of dogmatic theology to cite individual passages from the Fathers; we should try to find the universal belief of the Church, evidenced in the historical testimonies from the very beginning, for this universal belief forms a norm of faith in itself, and, at the same time, preserves, ex-

¹ "Septies in die cadit justus" (Prov. 24, 16) is often used, although the '*in die*' is not to be found in the passage.

plains and completes the contents of the Scriptures. Hence this argument should be adduced in its *fulness*, and, first of all, from the most ancient rules of faith, the Apostolic and other symbols, from the decrees, doctrines, judgments and decisions of the councils, as well as from the ecclesiastically approved particular-councils, and furthermore from the proof of the uniform teachings and sayings of the Fathers, especially of those, who have a great weight in the Church, and who shone, both in and out of councils, by their activity as teachers. It was therefore an extravagant error of the Jansenists, in the interest of their system, when they put up the thesis that every doctrine of St. Augustine is to be admitted, irrespective of any ecclesiastical definition.¹ Furthermore, we ought not to overlook the development of dogmas in the progress of ecclesiastical life, indicated by St. Augustine,² by Vincent of Lerins,³ and of late by the Vatican Council.⁴ "Many truths" says St. Augustine⁵ "were, on ac-

¹ Prop. 31 damn. ab Alex. VIII. d. 7 Dec. 1690. Prop. 30: Ubi quis invenerit doctrinam in Augustino clare fundatam, illam absolute potest tenere et docere, non respiciendo ad ullam Pontificis bullam.

² De dono perserv., c. 20.

³ Commonit. c. 23.

⁴ De fide cath. c. IV in fine.

⁵ De civit. Dei XVI., 2.

count of the opposition of heretics, more *diligently* considered, more *clearly* known and more *emphatically* enunciated." Thus one and the same truth, although essentially remaining identical, has always been presented in new and more definite terms. The later definitions are fully comprehended in the more ancient, although they exist in these, as it were, in a germ; the later have merely developed, more exactly explained and better applied the earlier. The argument from tradition should accomplish this, namely, it ought to show how this one unchangeable truth has passed through various stages, expressions and modes of apprehension in the course of time.

As you see, my young friend, the *history of dogma* here comes in contact with dogmatic theology. They are *not identical*; dogmatic theology proposes the ever same substance of faith under the different modifications of its development; but, to relate the history of this development, the influence of time and culture, the diatribes of heretics that called forth new definitions,¹ to relate this is not its office. Much less would this be the case, were dogmatic theology nothing else — and this is the opinion of the liberal wing in Protestant theology — than the expression of contemporaneous consciousness, which erro-

¹ August. 1. c.

neously identifies religious ideas with their temporal forms of appearance; these, they say, obscure the Christian idea, and consequently it is the duty of the history of dogma to distinguish the one from the other. ¹

No, this is not the case; not only are the *contents* of dogma true and remain so for all times, but also its *expression*, and sometimes even the *words*, which the Fathers and the Church have formulated. A change and progress in expression, demonstration and development of the Christian idea may take place, but only in the sense expressed by Vincent of Lerins. ²

Of late, even among Catholics the erroneous idea has been expressed, that tradition is the rule for interpreting the Bible. In itself this is true, but it holds good only for that tradition, which lives in the bosom of the Church, which is recognized by her as true tradition. In principle the heretics themselves acknowledge tradition, but they take account also of secret and false traditions, as the Gnostics did; or, like the Arians, they interpret them to fit their own case. And therefore tradition is not the immediate, but only

¹ Thus R. Lipsius, *Lehrbuch der evang.-protest Dogmatik*, p. 123; Thus Harnak in his *Dogmengeschichte*, and his followers, who seem to pride themselves in being the grave-diggers of Christian dogma.

² Common. c. 22.

the mediate rule of faith; the Church alone is the immediate rule.

Based on all these functions, the dogmatist now proceeds to *speculation*. Recently this word has often been incorrectly used, especially under the dominion of the pantheistic systems of Schelling and Hegel. With Schelling it meant an intellectual view, with Hegel the dialectic progress of the notion out of which they *a priori* construed the universe; both banished logic, because it "impedes speculation." In this sense, my young friend, we do not speak of speculative dogmatic theology. With us it is the *theologia speculativa* of the ancients in contradistinction to *theologia positiva*. Speculation in this sense does not originate from philosophical systems, nor does it at all confound and confuse philosophy and theology. Nor likewise does it undertake to prove faith by reason and to *comprehend* its doctrines, which essentially are a "supernatural theory."¹ Just as little can it do this, based on faith and presupposing faith; for we have no insight into a mystery from intrinsic reasons, and therefore our intellect enlightened by faith, cannot give any direct proofs.² What is then the office of speculative dogmatic theology?

¹ Clement Alex. Strom. II., 2.

² Thomas, Summa, II. II., q. 1, a. 5, ad 2: Rationes, quae inducuntur a sanctis ad probandum ea, quae sunt fidei, non

Since revelation appeals to the human reason, this latter must, instructed thereby, fix the terms, by which it (reason), may although not adequately, understand and propose the mystery. Enlightened by faith, the human intellect should then show the organic connexion of the dogmas between each other, as well as in their relation to the ultimate end of man. Reason, furthermore, by uniting dogma to dogma should deduce those doctrines which have been only imperfectly and mediately revealed from the dogmas of faith, or also, by uniting truths of the natural order with dogmas of faith, form theological conclusions.¹ In doing this, theological speculation should be well aware that its notions about God can find only an analogous application, since being taken from the finite, they can render the infinite only very imperfectly. We know God by His effects, by His creation; but God's essence is only imperfectly illustrated by these. Much less can speculation fully comprehend the mysterious; for how should finite intelligence be able to give an adequate idea of the inner life and being of the infinite essence of

sunt demonstrativae, sed persuasiones quaedam manifestantes, non esse impossibile, quod in fide proponitur.

¹ Conc. Vat. l. c. c. 4: Tum ex eorum, quae naturaliter cognoscit, analogia, tum ex mysteriorum nexu inter se et cum fine hominis ultimo.

God?¹ In the mysteries of the natural order our mind knows the "therefore," but not perfectly the "what," because we judge of the essence of things by their appearances; we have not an immediate cognition of the essence; in the mysteries of revelation on the contrary, we know neither the "what" nor the "therefore;" we acquire the knowledge of it only by positive divine instruction.²

Thus our faith is in a certain sense confirmed by speculative theology, not in itself, for it rests on the unerring word of God, but only as regards ourselves, because it refutes infidelity, removes doubt and shows us the harmony existing between faith and reason.³

Thus faith, in speculative theology, celebrates its nuptials with reason, as in actual grace, grace does with free will. There the result of this union is a deeper and fuller understanding of revealed truths, here the supernatural good work is the result of divinely-willed justice.

Hence, my dear Timothy, you see in speculative theology the crown and perfection of

¹ Conc. Vat., 1. c. c. 4: (Ratio) nunquam idonea redditur ad ea (mysteria) perspicienda instar veritatum, quae proprium ipsius objectum constituunt.

² 1 Cor. 2, 8: "Which (wisdom) none of the princes of this world knew;" 2, 10: "But to us God hath revealed them by His Spirit."

³ Sum. I., q. 1, a. 5 ad 2.

370 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

theology. It has very truly the task to place before our eyes the glory of God, and His great deeds, visible in the acts of His merciful condescension, and likewise to describe the supernatural world, which God from all eternity bore in His mind, the grand world of grace, infinitely higher and more wonderful than the whole universe. Now we feel ourselves powerfully lifted on high; now with greater knowledge a blissful joy enters our heart; now God approaches closer; but how could we approach Him, our minds illumined with a higher light, and He pouring over us a fire of love, without ourselves becoming inflamed with love? But dogmatic theology is not an accumulation of dead terms and sentences, only exteriorly linked together, but a book full of spirit and life, in which is written the history of the whole world and of each one of us, of its ailments and remedies, which gives an answer to our questions, solves our problems, which always remain a riddle to the infidel, in which mankind has read these hundreds of years and yet has not finished reading. Now every doctrine becomes a fact, an impulse to holy activity, a power influencing the history and government of the Church, a creative principle, not mere knowledge and cognition. Now we learn to understand the ways of

God with mankind, now we acquire an anticipation of that joyful possession and delight, which is the portion of the saints, when they view the Infinite in the light of eternity. If we realize, that not one iota in sacred doctrine is without a meaning, but is an element of blessing, of peace, of consolation, that all of them are but seeds in the garden of God, blossoms on the tree of the Church, which spreads its branches over the whole world, and matures its fruits unto eternity, then does that deep, full satisfaction enter into our hearts, which will be ours, when heart and mind in like manner shall have found their center, in which to rest.



LETTER XIX.

Moral Theology.

Moral theology is intimately connected with dogmatic theology, so intimately in fact, that for a long time they were taught as one branch. In modern times however it has been separated from dogmatic theology, and formed into a distinct science. Some advantages toward a scientific treatment may accrue from this; but we must not deny, that, had the separation not taken place, moral theology would not have become so shallow. Therefore this separation can only be relative; moral theology is closely allied to dogmatic theology; this presupposes that, the former acquires truth and life by the latter. Dogmatic theology has an ethical side and Christian ethics a dogmatical. Dogmatic theology treats of faith, that should enter and penetrate the creature through love; and for this reason the ancients called moral theology a *scientia practica* in opposition to the *theologia speculativa*. Ethics treats of the way of life which proceeds from faith and derives its direction from it. The just man lives by faith. Dog-

matic theology places before us God's plan in creation, redemption and sanctification, and reveals to us the aims of Providence, the ground-plan of the edifice of the city of God in the angelic and human world; Christian morality shows us the paths which lead us by grace and free will into the kingdom of God. Dogmatic theology tells us what God is in Himself and what He is for man; moral theology, what man is, and what he should become with the help of God. In the former we acquire a knowledge of God principally, of His attributes, His counsels concerning man and the consummation of all things, as also of the victory of the reign of goodness, which must necessarily come to pass; in the latter we meditate on this reign in as far as it is to be realized by us; in the former we view God in His relation to man, in the latter, man in his relation to God; in the former what is, and what was, and what will be, God, and the Highest Good; in the latter what ought to be and what ought not to be, Christian justice and sin. This latter is as well the subject of dogmatic as of moral theology, but in another way and manner; in the former it is considered as the revolt of the first man against the divine will, and this sin, permeating the whole human race, has drawn it, as to body and soul, along with itself into

374 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

destruction, and likewise placed man's body and soul into a condition not willed by God; moral theology, on the contrary, considers sin especially in its effects in the individual through his free determination.

Christ, the Redeemer, forms the center of dogma as well as of ethics; but there He appears as the High-priest and Mediator, Who by His death on the cross brought to all redemption and reconciliation; in moral He appears especially as the "One raised on high," as our King and Head, from Whom "proceeds as from the head into the members and from the vine into the branches, a supernatural power, which precedes, accompanies and follows our good works,"¹ and to Whom, as the "Author and Perfecter of our salvation" we always raise our eyes, at the sight of Whom we possess the model and rule for all higher life, in Whose imitation the sum-total of all Christian virtues consists.

Dogma dwells on the Holy Ghost, proceeding from all eternity from the Father and the Son, and sent in time as a gift to mankind for its sanctification and beatification. Moral dwells on the ruling of the Holy Ghost and of His gifts in our hearts, Whose inspirations man must listen to, the contempt of which leads to the greatest of sins, to the

¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. VI, de justif., c. 16.

sin against the Holy Ghost. The Church is the subject of dogma, which represents her to us as the victorious kingdom of God on earth, through whom all truth is announced to us, all graces communicated, and by whom we must be led on the road to salvation; but in moral also she is of importance, in as far as we owe her obedience as the mother of the faithful, given to us by Christ, whose commandments we must obey, and to whom we owe respect and love in all things. In dogmatic theology, eschatology forms the conclusion and perfection of the works of God in history; in moral it forms the essential view-point, from which the universal human life, of the individual as well as of the race of mankind, receives its importance, its aim and impulse, where all the great questions of the world's history, all the struggles between the kingdom of God and the powers of darkness find their final explanation and solution.

Thus dogma tends toward moral, as truth seeks in life its demonstration and exemplification, and moral rests upon dogma, as life without truth is necessarily only a quasi-life, only deceit. There is hardly a thesis in dogma, which has not its importance for religious life, and there is no law of morality, which has not its foundation in some

dogmatical thought. Thus it is the idea of moral theology, to transform dogma into life, to make the Christ in history and in the Church, Christ in us.

Theologians commonly define moral theology as the *science of the ethic life of man on the basis of Christian faith*. Different authors have modified this definition differently, but the essentials are the same with all; it is the system of Christian life. Not sentiment, nor moral tact, nor much less *eudaemonistic momenta* (motives of happiness) can constitute the morality of human acts, but only reason enlightened by faith can do this. It presents to the will the act as one wished by God, and in as far as this act is directed toward an end, it becomes a moral act, it acquires moral goodness.¹

Here then, my dear Timothy, we meet with the great and widespread heresy of our day, the doctrine of *autonomous* morality. It has been formed mainly as a reaction against that tendency of orthodox Protestantism, which, founded on its teaching on original sin and the total depravity of the moral nature of man, denied to man, outside of the sphere of revelation, each and all moral cognition, each and every moral act. It will not

¹ Thom. Summ. I. II., q. 19, a. 1 ad 3; q. 18, a. 2 ad 3; I. II., q. 58, a. 1.

be necessary to refute this, they have done this themselves long ago. The old-orthodox doctrine has been dropped to a man, and autonomous morality has gotten into so many contradictions with itself, that none of its adepts can really tell, in what it really consists. I need not here refer to the ethics of sensism, and *naturalism* (Hume, Locke, Bentham), which recently thinks and praises itself as having found in Darwinism a better confirmation of its doctrine. It is eudaemonism and epicurism in a more or less crude form. In contrast with this we find the *categorical imperative* of Kant, which concedes to the desire after beatitude no right in our moral striving, and which bases the whole kingdom of morals on the dutiful action of our moral nature. Had he only asked himself the question, if all rests on duty, on what then is based the *idea of duty, moral nature itself*? Does not devotion or submission to duty include the belief in a *moral order of the world*, standing above me, does it not include the belief in an *ethical authority*, which, in spite of all powers of immorality, will nevertheless conquer, in one word, does it not include the belief in the conquering and therefore divine power of the kingdom of morality? Therefore Kant could not conclude his ethics, without having given his moral proof of

378 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

the existence of God, i. e. the postulate of a power, in which the ethical and divine are one, and which has therefore the power to realize the ideals of our nature, which call for the adjustment of the contradictions between morality and beatitude in this life. Much less can that tendency hold its own, which indicates the culture of *humanity* as the principle of ethics. We could consent to this, if the preliminary question were first answered, what is to be understood by the term, *humanity*? Is it man without God, involved in all the waywardness of his mind, battling with all the evil desires of his heart, who knows not his entrance nor his exit, and believes himself at one time to be like God, at another, like the brute? Or is it man as he should be in the counsels of God, the man of sin and of redemption, whose highest and only duty it is to be transfigured into the image of Christ, our prototype and eternal model? Then gladly we shall grant that autonomy, which the Son bestows, Who, liberating us from slavery, has elevated us to the freedom of the children of God, and Who has given us an ideal of our moral striving in the *theonomy* of our better self. "If the Son has made you free, you shall be free indeed."¹

¹ John, 8, 36.

We do not herewith wish to deny the rights of *natural ethics*; it is related to Christian morality as the lower is to the higher, the presentiment to the realization, as nature is to grace. From the beginning measure and law were given to all free beings, and the end established, toward which they must strive, in which they must perfect themselves. Christ has revealed to us the end and aim of all *ethos* (morality); God has appeared in Christ, He is the splendor of His glory, the image of His essence, in Whom the fulness of the divinity dwells; who sees Him, sees the Father, for He and the Father are one. He is therefore the principle of Christian morality, the way, the truth, and the life. Christian morals therefore rest on the gospel; Christian morality must be drawn from it, not from theses foreign to it.

Thus, my dear Timothy, you may conceive the difference, not contradiction, between natural ethics and Christian moral, as our great theologians, especially St. Thomas, have understood it.¹ The morality, which has not looked into the heart of Christ and learned there to live, suffer and die, is *not Christian morality*; and therefore we may not apply to Catholic morality a definition derived from philosophy.

¹ Contra gent. IV., 95; Sum. I. II., q. 106, a. 1 ad 2.

Two corollaries follow from this. We often hear it said, that in religious questions men differ and contradict one another, but, that they are of one mind in questions of morality. Nothing is so far from the truth as this; as far as heaven is distant from earth, so far is Christian morality distant from purely natural morality, even if the latter were a purely natural one, not disfigured by many errors. The words of the poet are applicable here:

That thou may'st know, she aswered
straight, the school

That thou hast follow'd; and how far
behind,

When following my discourse, its learning halts:

And may'st behold your art, from the
divine

As distant, as the disagreement is

'Twixt earth and heaven's most high
and rapturous orb.¹

The principles of cognition of both are different, the motives of both are different, the aims of both are different, the means are different, and therefore the moral phenomena are different in both. Philosophical ethics knows not sin and redemption; and he, who has no knowledge of these, *knows not life as it is*. Christianity unveils to us the real depth of our fall,

¹ Dante, *Purg.* XXXIII., 85 v.

the misery of sin, in order the more abundantly to apply the fruits of redemption. How noble is not the tendency in Christianity, which has God, Who revealed Himself to us in Christ, for a model! What disinterestedness of sentiment, which must be renewed unto the innermost depths of the soul! What purity of intention, which seeks for nothing but to give to God all glory! What spirituality of the whole man, whom Christianity is truly capable of recreating in a new birth! The whole life of man, born again, is nothing else than the assumption of Christ into one's faithful heart, the consecration of one's self with one's whole personality, without restriction and measure, to Christ, the union of life with Him, and through Him with the Father; and from this love of Christ and God flows necessarily love toward one's neighbor, a love, which is able to give its life for the brethren. Place a Socrates alongside of one of the least of the Christian saints. There we have external Grecian morality, here the innerly renewed man; there the self-sufficient pride, here fervent humility; there the contempt of everyone not Grecian, here a heart open to all mankind. Place the cold egotism of a Schopenhauer beside the love of a Francis of Assisi, the ridicule of Voltaire beside the meekness of a Francis de Sales, a J. J. Rousseau alongside of a Vincent de Paul!

The reason, my young friend, that there is no harmony in morality, where there is no harmony of faith, is evident. What is the object of moral? Surely man, his mission, his end, his means and his duties, in one word, it may be defined as the treatise on: *what is man?* This is a sphinx-like riddle, to solve which mankind has tried these last six thousand years, to the solution of which they have at one time, more closely approached, at another receded, to which revelation alone can give a true and full answer.

The foregoing remarks furnish me the occasion to add an afterthought. Until lately it had been the custom among Protestants, and also among not a few Catholic theologians, to search for the highest moral principles. Thus the Wolffian school named the principle of perfection as the highest moral principle, rationalism the principle of beatitude, Kant the categorical imperative, Schleiermacher the union of reason and nature. Others again named as the highest principle of morality disinterested social tendency (Hugh Grotius), self-love (Th. Hobbes), beatitude (Samuel Puffendorf), interest (Condillac, Helvetius, La Rochefoucauld), the English and Scots love of man, sympathy (Adam Smith), moral instinct (Reid). Much pain was taken to refute these opinions and to

find the true highest moral principle. It was wasted energy; our moral theology does not have to go in search for its highest principle, this has long ago been given it in the revelation of Christ and His organ, the Church.

For this reason I should like to express a wish regarding our Catholic moral theology. As the dogmatist bases his theses on the teaching of the Church, and derives them from the fountain of revelation, from the Scriptures and tradition, so also it ought to be in the representation of Christian life. In principle they all admit this, and the Jesuit F. A. Zaccaria emphasizes it especially, but there is still much wanting before it is fully and consistently carried out. It is correct, that the New Testament does not contain a dogmatic codex of moral law; but it bears relation to the Old Testament, as the perfect to the less perfect, as the fruit to the bud;¹ it contains the teachings on sin and sanctification; sin we realize in its whole depth and significance from the Scriptures exclusively, and sanctification has no other foundation than the word and actions of Christ.² To this must be added, that from the earliest times the Church has given testimony of her moral

¹ Matth. 5, 17.

² Thomas, I. II., q. 107, a. 2.

consciousness as well as of her faith; there are so many canons and decrees of councils, so many formal doctrinal decisions of infallible ecclesiastical authority open to the moral theologian, which he should not ignore, as little as the dogmatist may ignore her decisions in points of faith. Likewise the Church has given disciplinary decisions, which are rules for the universal Church, and which regard morals as well as faith. The difference between Christian moral and ecclesiastical discipline is to be found in this, that the former has directly and immediately the moral act as its object, the latter only mediately; moral directly regulates the order of external Christian life, but bears, in like manner as ecclesiastical discipline in regard to universal discipline, the character of infallibility. Furthermore the holy Fathers have made many, nay very many points of Christian moral the subject of their meditations; I shall remind you of Sts. Ambrose and Augustine only among the Latins, Clement of Alexandria, Sts. Basil and Chrysostom among the Greeks. Let us not say, they were children of their own day, and therefore they cannot constitute a rule and measure for us. Assuredly everyone is a child of his time. But we thus speak here as we did of dogmatic tradition, of the opinions and sayings of the Fathers, not as private

persons, but as witnesses of tradition, and this can and should be verified. In morals, as it appears universally in the life of the Church, under her eyes, and, at least with the tacit approbation of her whole teaching faculty, we recognize a rule for the moral life of Catholics, and in still greater measure we do so in the saints which the Church has placed before us as models. I have spoken of this at length in my treatise on "Fundamental Theology."¹ As liturgy, and the common teaching of theologians, and the universal faith of Catholic Christianity form a criterion, by which we may know true doctrine, so does the moral teaching of the universal Church form a criterion also. Nay, it is a characteristic of morality, apparent in the universal life of all the faithful over the whole earth and at all times, that it gives an overwhelming testimony of its emanation from God, and this banishes more powerfully all subjectivism, than is done by purely speculative questions.

Theological science also and its approved authorities are a source of moral cognition. There has perhaps been too much use made of this in the last centuries, and the proposition condemned by Alexander VII. proves

¹ 2nd edit. Freiburg 1888, p. 710 sq.

sufficiently how much a thought can be abused, which in itself is justifiable,¹

At the beginning of this letter, my young friend, I spoke of the mutual relation of moral and dogmatic theology. I will once more return to the same topic. It cannot be disputed, that the subject of dogmatic theology, the divine things, over which mystery hovers like an impenetrable veil, is immensely great and noble, and that the demonstration of its truths is therefore the most difficult office of created intelligence. Moral theology, on the contrary, represents Christian life, our own life, which through obedience to the laws of Christ and the influence of grace, should sanctify itself and become like to God. Nevertheless the moral theologian has not an easier task than the dogmatist. The reason for this, I think, lies in the fact, that dogmatic theology has a tradition of more than a thousand years; moral theology, as a separate science, is quite young; dogmatic theology, with all differences that exist in minor points, has nevertheless a universally acknowledged harmonious system; moral theology, as yet, has not. To this may be added another thing, which is of greater weight. True,

¹ Prop. 27 damn. d. 24 Sept. 1665: Si liber sit alicujus junioris et moderni, debet opinio censeri probabilis, dum non constat rejectam esse a Sede apostolica tamquam improbabilem.

the conditions of human life, which form the meditation of moral theology, are more intelligible and less hidden from us, than the mysteries of redemption and sanctification, but nevertheless it is easier for us to recognize the inner cohesion and historical pragmatism of these, than to represent the manifold life of mankind in its individual and social developments, and to comprise them uniformly under correct categories. This is rendered the more difficult, because modern times have cultivated scientific disciplines, especially social and political economy, which comprise a wide field of knowledge, and which nevertheless more or less come in contact with moral theology. Commerce and industry, stock-companies and associations of every kind, loan and trust companies, factories and the labor-question have gained an importance, which Catholic moral theology cannot ignore. Here then it is necessary to consider all this in the light of the gospel, to find and to apply the ancient rules of morality, resting upon the revelations of God, to the new branches of human activity, and to permeate them with the leaven of the divine word, and to lead them to heaven. Thus moral theology among the theological sciences is the one which progresses the most with the development of earthly life, and which by its eternal and immutable princip-

les, with a steady hand, marks the lines, along which it is to move.

In fact, review the literature of moral theology and you will meet a curious phenomenon, which however finds its explanation in what I have said. The one emphasizes more the scientific, theoretical, let us say scholastic part, the others direct their attention more to the development of the moral life as well as toward its positive (doctrine of virtues) as toward its negative side (doctrine on sin). The first consider above all the principles, the foundations and universal decrees for all morality as they are found in rational human nature, and as they have been elevated by Christ to a higher grade of existence and transformed into the sphere of the supernatural life of grace. Both ways we find united in St. Thomas Aquinas. He begins his moral theology with the question on the Highest Good and the ultimate end of man.¹ Based on this he develops the suppositum of morality, — human liberty;² founded on this again, the moral goodness or evil of human acts,³ as also the doctrine on the passions and virtues, and on sin.⁴ Then he proceeds to the external principles of human

¹ Sum. I. II., q. 1-5.

² 1. c. q. 6-17.

³ 1. c. q. 18-21.

⁴ 1. c. q. 22-89.

acts,¹ the law of nature, human law, divine law; these form the directive principles of moral action; but to perfect this another principle is necessary, — grace.² And only now has he prepared the ground for the meditation on the individual virtues, considering at the same time their opposites.

As you see, my young friend, St. Thomas understood how to unite the two tendencies of moral theology, the universal, that according to principles, the theoretical, speculative, with the practical and concrete, and that very appropriately. In the whole *Secunda Secundae* of his *Summa* he develops the doctrine on the particular virtues up to asceticism and mysticism even up to the doctrine of evangelical perfection, where man, dead to the world, lives a hidden life with Christ in God. This life derives its nourishment from the mystical, sacramental union of the ascetic with the body of Christ, whereby he enters into a real union of body and life with the glorified Redeemer. Thus asceticism and mysticism form the apex and perfection of Catholic moral theology.

Now, my dear Timothy, consider, in how far our later moralists have followed the ex-

¹ 1. c. q. 90-108.

² 1. c. q. 90 prooem,

ample of St. Thomas. Although for a time, owing to the great influence of philosophy, and that of false and anti-Christian philosophy, a decline of this science in the field of speculation had been noticeable, nevertheless modern times can show that excellent work has been done. Recently the other tendency in moral theology, namely to represent Christian life in its concrete form as regards the different virtues, callings and classes, in the forms and stages of its development, as well as of the means to arrive thereat, has been treated successfully, and the ascetic element has not been overlooked, without which a superficial moralizing would have been mixed up with the sobriety of science. The care of souls also requires that our attention be called to the impediments of moral life, that the dangers be pointed out, and the aberrations in this field be indicated, and the line be drawn distinctly and clearly, where the moral life of the Christian stops and the kingdom of evil begins, where the free act becomes immoral and sinful.

Casuistry has grown out of this endeavor. It has been very often accused, but, to a great extent, wrongly. In itself it can and should be nothing else than an application of the laws to the events of Christian life,

just like casuistry in civil law. Thus far scientific moral theology cannot do without casuistry; its theories must verify themselves in life, its principles must find application in action. For this reason we find casuistic definitions among the Fathers, Sts. Cyprian, Augustine and especially in the writings of St. Gregory the Great. There it was especially canonical law, which was then beginning to be cultivated, the development of the penitential laws, the origin of penitential books, which according to the gravity of the sin decreed adequate penances. The Protestant who recognizes in the subjective conviction of the individual, be this derived from moral judgment or from the Bible as interpreted subjectively, who allows the spirit that moves him, to define ultimately, has naturally no understanding for casuistry. It is quite different in the Catholic; the word of God, deposited in the Scriptures and tradition, the explanations, decrees and definitions of the Church concerning the moral life of its members, are so many laws, which regulate our actions; and therefore we shall find in these, for each single instance, the norm for our doings. Let us not say: our innate moral sense, a certain tact, the inspiration of the moment must decide; he who acts thus,

following the momentary inspiration, his temporary feeling, his whims, his likes or dislikes, is continually in danger of sinning. If however we cannot arrive at a certainty that will ease our conscience, if there are reasons for and against a certain thing; if we cannot overcome the doubt, what then?

Then *probabilism* assumes its right. Not as if we were allowed to act on mere probability; for all that is not of faith, is sin.¹ Since an uncertain law cannot bind me,² and furthermore, as long as a law has not been sufficiently promulgated and become known to me, and since freedom in itself is anterior to law,³ I am allowed to follow a truly (*certo et valide*) probable opinion, and free myself from an uncertain obligation. The Church has condemned the false conclusions drawn from this principle, without condemning the principle itself.⁴ Let it not be said, that the more probable opinion is nearer to the truth. For whether probable or

¹ Rom. 14, 23.

² Thom. Quest. disp. De verit. q. 17, a. 3: Nullus ligatur per praeceptum aliquod, nisi mediante scientia illius praecepti.

³ Eccli. 15, 14-16,

⁴ Prop. damn. ab Innoc. XI. d. 2 Martii 1679. Prop. 3: Generatim dum probabilitate sive intrinseca sive extrinseca quantumvis tenui, modo a probabilitatis finibus non exeat, confisi aliquid agimus, semper prudenter agimus. cf. prop. damn. 27. ab Alex. VII.

more probable, both opinions do not go beyond probability and cannot therefore establish certainty. The axiom, that in case of doubt freedom holds possession, establishes a certainty for him, who must act. It is self-evident, that probabilism in this sense is not applicable to all kinds of laws; where there is question of a duty, on the fulfilment of which our salvation or the salvation of our neighbor depends, it is not applicable; equally so it is not applicable where there is question of an official duty, confirmed by contract.¹

Knowing this, you may see, my young friend, how little Protestants understand probabilism and casuistry, since one of their theologians could write that it (probabilism) renders uncertain the highest moral truths for which an unconditional certainty is required, and that it degrades what is highest and holiest down to an object of probability — speculation.² We Catholics are sincere about our duties, and much more so the confessor must be, in order that he may

¹ Prop. damn. ab Innoc. XI. 1679. Prop. 1: Non est illicitum in sacramentis conferendis sequi opinionem probabilem de valore sacramenti relicta tutiore, nisi id vetat lex, conventio aut periculum gravis damni incurrendi. Prop. 2: Probabiliter existimo judicem posse judicare juxta opinionem etiam minus probabilem. Prop. 4: Ab infidelitate excusabitur non credens, ductus opinione minus probabilis.

² Martensen, Die christl. Ethik I., p. 606.

not, like the pharisees, impose burdens, which a man cannot carry, and which confuse consciences. Where there is, for example, question of restoring ill-gotten goods, and where, if restitution be enjoined, the ruin of a family would follow, there the confessor must fully examine the case, before he gives his decision. Thus the Church guards moral freedom against false legality, but at the same time preserves for law its proper dignity and right. Pharisaical rigorism or antinomian laxism must necessarily enter where there are no certain, ecclesiastically sanctioned rules to direct our actions and to preserve us from sin.

What we have said of probabilism, is in a certain sense applicable to casuistry. Casuistry is only a part of moral theology, and by far not the most essential one. It is not really the doctrine of our duties, not really the doctrine of virtues; it seeks only to draw the line that separates the morally licit from the illicit. It is necessarily connected with the office of a priest in his calling as confessor; not in vain does he hold the two keys, the key of the knowledge of worthiness, and that of absolution.¹

¹ Dante, *Purg.* IX., 108 sq.

Two keys of metal twain; the one was gold,
Its fellow silver. With the pallid first,

It is quite different in Protestantism; "there," to use a harsh sentence of Claus Harms, "the gents and ladies forgive their own sins."

Therefore, my young friend, do not allow yourself to be led astray in the study of moral theology and of casuistry, although the latter, at first sight, will not be sympathetic to you. Considered correctly and rightly used, casuistry is a very useful and desirable help in the difficult task of directing of souls. You should not, however, fail to fix your attention on these three points: first, you ought not to forget, that in casuistry you rather possess a pathology of moral life and an introduction to the diagnosis of diseases, than a picture of the normal growth from the first stages of the life of grace up to the highest steps of perfection. Just those who have done great things in the line of casuistry, have also by their ascetic writings become teachers, and by their lives models of Christian virtue. Clement toward the penitent, they did not wish, follow-

And next the burnish'd, he so ply'd the gate,
As to content me well. "Whenever one
Faileth of these, that in the keyhole straight
It turn not, to this alley then expect
Access in vain." Such were the words he spoke.
"One is more precious: but the other needs
Skill and sagacity, large share of each,
Ere its good task to disengage the knot
Be worthily performed."—Thomas, Suppl., q. 17, a. 3.

ing in this St. Alphonsus, to make the yoke of Christ a crushing burden, and to oblige them to acts, which neither God nor the Church impose under mortal sin; the greater, however, were the tasks they imposed upon their own selves, in order to progress in perfection. For the law was not made for the just man; ¹ he lives up to it out of love; he elevates himself even beyond the law, because love inspires him, because the spirit leads him farther than the law does. Where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty. ² Secondly, you must not overlook the great difference that exists between casuistry in *jurisprudence* and casuistry in *moral*. Jurisprudence asks for the external possible act; moral, on the contrary, looks more to the intention, with which it was done; and therefore precisely every case of conscience has an individual character, which will not allow itself to be judged by a purely external rule, and which will always be different in different persons. Therefore, in the third place, it is necessary, that we judge of individual cases by certain, objective principles, based on science, and approved by it. This is primarily necessary.

¹ 1 Tim. 1, 9.

² 2 Cor. 3, 17.

LETTER XX.

Canon Law.

Canon law stands in intimate connection with dogmatic and moral theology. The doctrine of the Church on faith and her regulations for the Christian life are the root, from which all canon law has sprung forth. The ecclesiastical canons are the practical conclusions, applications and confirmations of the doctrines on faith and morals of the Church; from her they receive their meaning, sense, power and life. The doctrines on faith and morals are immutable, the ecclesiastical canons, on the contrary, have changed in the course of time to suit circumstances. True, the laws of the first ages of the Church had a greater importance and were of higher authority, for they emanated in part immediately from the apostles; but the legal life of the Church has not been exhausted in them.

This legal life of the Church then is *divine* and *human*; the former comes immediately from Christ, as, for instance, the commandment of monogamy, the essential constitution of the hierarchy; the latter rests proximately

on human institution. Both kinds of law have the office, based on the common faith, to regulate the conditions among the members of the Church, to form an order of Christian life. We call it ecclesiastical law or canon law, in opposition to civil law, because of its systematic exposition of all those laws, which have as their object the order of the Church and the guidance of the Christian people on their road to eternal life. It is also called *jus pontificium* in opposition to *jus caesareum*; Dante has developed this thought in a special manner.

The emperor, he says, that is, the highest mediaeval power, must direct man to his end in this life; the Pope, the highest spiritual power, must direct him to his eternal end.¹

From this, my young friend, you may gather the relation of canon law to moral theology. Both are practical sciences, because they regulate the actions of man, and do not, as the speculative sciences, stop with intellectual cognition.² Both stand under God, they are more or less founded in His holy will, and receive from Him their ultimate and highest sanction. Laws, which by ultimate analysis are not based on God, are not

¹ Purg. XIV., 110 cf. De monarch. 1. III. passim. — Leo XIII., Encycl. "Immortale Dei" d. 1. Nov. 1885.

² Thomas, Sum. I., q. 14, a. 16.

laws, but arrogance and usurpation. The moral order is the foundation of the legal order, and this again becomes the public recognition of the moral order.¹ Correctly therefore does Trendelenburg say: "The false autonomy of law, which was regarded as progress of science, has not only disfigured law in its theory, but has also taken from law its dignity in life, has encouraged the idea of a mechanism of law and taken the soul out of legal notions."²

I have just spoken of a *jus pontificium* in opposition to a *jus caesareum*. Both take their name and receive their distinguishing trait from the highest legislative powers, the Pope and the emperor. The Pope is the head of the Church, of the visible kingdom of God on earth, the emperor, of the secular kingdom. The Church is a visible, perfect society, as the state also is in the natural order; and therefore she possesses everything, that is necessary for the attainment of her end, and needs not, as a business-association, first receive her laws from the state; and for this reason there dwells in her a Christ-given authority, a power, by virtue of which she orders and regulates all that is necessary or useful for the salvation of souls. And thus the different

¹ Leo XIII., *Encycl.* "Diuturnum." d. 29 Junii 1881; cf. *Encycl.* "Immortale Dei."

² *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, p. 20.

offices and powers in the Church have been instituted by Christ Himself in their essential points.¹ All later development has budded forth, based on the institution of Christ, just according as the changing needs of the Church in the course of time called for it.

Therefore the Church not only has the office to enact decrees relative to moral life, to explain and apply the natural and the revealed law, but, because she is a visible and perfect society, she has also to regulate the *external* order of her members, to legislate, to promulgate commandments and prohibitions and to punish transgressions. He, who has become a member of the Church, a citizen of this kingdom has by that very fact vowed to subject himself to her laws, to live according to her mandates, which constitute for him a *jus cogens*. Therefore the Church is vested with coercive power, *potestas coactiva*, by which she can, by external compulsion, urge the fulfilment of the divine law entrusted to her.² True, this power is *spiritual* in origin and means, but not *purely spiritual*, for she is a visible kingdom on earth. Punishment is only a means, edification is her aim.³

¹ Matth. 16, 19; 18, 18; Ephes. 4, 11-14; Conc. Vat. Constit. de Eccl. Christ. Prooem.

² cf. Const. Pii VI. "Auctorem fidei." Prop. 4, 5.

³ 2 Cor. 13, 10.

At the head of the government of the Church, and in full possession of the ecclesiastical power stands the *Pope* as the successor of St. Peter. As a diocese is placed under the guardianship of a bishop, so the universal Church is placed under the Pope; ¹ his power is *ordinary*, resting in him by virtue of his office; it is *immediate*, because Christ Himself has bestowed on him full power, because all powers invested by Christ in the Church are primarily and wholly in him, whilst all other members of the hierarchy are called to participate only in his pastoral care and power. He is therefore responsible only to God and to his conscience, not to any other power in the Church. Although it is the supreme power with which he is invested, yet it is *not* the *only* power; ² his does not exclude the power residing in the bishops by virtue of the institution of Christ.

To the Pope belongs the supreme *judicial* and *legislative* power; there is no such a thing as a tribunal above him, to which appeal were possible. His power has no other bounds but those which Bossuet calls 'celles que donne la règle,' that is, the divine and natural law. The final reason for the ponti-

¹ John 21, 15-17.

² Bern., De consid. III., 4: Erras, si ut summam ita et solam institutam a Deo vestram apostolicam potestatem existimas.

fical plenitude of power lies in the mission of the Church; it is a *potestas in aedificationem*; and in this it has its *limits*.

From this follows finally, that the Church is absolutely *independent* when legislating in her own sphere. This power, conferred on her by Christ, was given unconditionally, and without dependence on the civil power. In *origin, end and means* to be used, in *contents* and *extent*, her power is different from that of the state. Leo XIII.¹ says: "The Church it is that has to lead us to heaven, not the state; to her care and protection all that is entrusted, which has reference to religion, namely, that she teach all nations, that she spread with all her might the kingdom of Christ on earth, in one word, that she be free and untrammelled and as she sees fit, the nurse and mistress in the kingdom of Christ. This her authority, perfectly independent in its sphere, which was so often impugned by certain jurists making their court to princes, the Church has always claimed and put into practice. The apostles themselves were the first to defend this authority by telling the elders of the synagogue, who had forbidden them to preach the gospel: "We ought to obey God rather than men."² Likewise the Holy

¹ Encycl. "Immortale Dei," d. 1 Nov. 1885.

² Acts. 5, 29.

Fathers strove to confirm opportunely this authority by arguments, and the Roman pontiffs have never ceased to assert manfully and with undaunted courage this authority against its adversaries. Thus God has entrusted the care of mankind to two powers, the civil and the spiritual. The one He has set to guard the divine things, the other the human. Each in its own sphere is the supreme power, each has its distinct limits, which its nature and object have outlined, so that each is inclosed as in a circle, within which it moves independently.

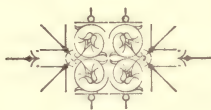
A well-regulated harmony should exist between these two powers, because the same persons are subject to both, because the same thing, although in a different manner, is subject to the law and judgment of both. The relation of soul and body has therefore been correctly used as a simile to represent both. How great and of what kind this harmony is to be, can be ascertained only by viewing the essence of both powers, by weighing the affairs of both in the light of their higher importance, and of their bearing to one another; for while the one has proximately and especially to care for man's temporal weal, the other, on the contrary, seeks to secure his heavenly and eternal welfare. Whatsoever, then, is holy in the life of mankind, whatever

has reference to the salvation of souls and to the divine worship, is subject to the ecclesiastical power; on the contrary, whatever has reference to the civil and political life of man, is justly subject to the civil power; for Jesus commands: Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's! Occasionally circumstances may require, that a concordat be established to restore peace and liberty, when, namely, the state and the Pope make agreements concerning certain questions. At such times the Church reveals in an especial manner her motherly love, by condescending and compromising as much as possible."

I can not add more to what has been said by such an authority. The Church, this kingdom bought by the precious blood of Christ, can never be the hand-maid of civil rulers, must not be subject to any state, must not subject her eternal laws to the laws of any certain country, which are enacted for a certain length of time only. St. Anselm of Canterbury¹ says: God loves nothing so much in this world as the liberty of His Church. She may be persecuted — assuredly her history is one of continual struggles — she cannot be conquered. *Qui potest mori, non potest vinci,*

¹ Ep. lib. IV., 9, ad Balduin. regem: *Nihil magis diligit Deus in hoc mundo, quam libertatem ecclesiae suae.*

was the constant saying of the Fathers. St. Hilary¹ says: This is a property of the Church: when she is persecuted, she conquers; when she is accused, she becomes known; when she is forsaken, she gains. The Church is a world-power, a spiritual one, and therefore the highest, established and instituted by God to take to her bosom the individual as well as society as a whole, the lowest as well as the highest, to feed them at her breast, to leaven them with her spirit, and thereby to rear them for heaven. Thousands and tens of thousands may oppose her, and, like Christ, her Lord, she passes through their midst unscathed, because He is with her. Temporal rights may change, arise and pass away, but the Church has the promise of eternal duration.



¹ De Trin, VII., 4.

LETTER XXI.

Biblical Studies.

Theoretical and practical theology are naturally followed by *historical* theology. Christianity stepped into time, and from its very origin has entered into the life of mankind, historically developed itself and itself made history. Thus historical meditation, historical theology is necessarily a branch of general theology. Distinguishing therefore between the history of revelation up to Christ and the foundation of His Church, as we find it authenticated in the Scriptures of the Old and New Law, and its historical development up to our times, historical theology is divided into two parts, *biblical* and *historical* theology in a *narrower* sense, with its auxiliary sciences.

For the study of the Bible¹ we enumerate a number of *auxiliary sciences*, which guide us toward an understanding of the Bible; there is a goodly number of them: biblical geography and topography, biblical chronology, biblical archaeology, biblical philology, criticism, and hermeneutics, introduction to the

¹ cf. Leo XIII. Encycl. "Providentissimus Deus". d. 18. Nov. 1893.

books of the Old and New Testament, etc. Let this not frighten you nor make you impatient.

All these sciences have established a right to existence and have been cultivated in the course of time, in order to clear the way for a correct understanding of the Scriptures and especially to preclude a corruption and false interpretation of them. St. Gregory the Great¹ says: *Haeretici, quia sacram Scripturam intelligere sua virtute moliuntur, eam procul dubio apprehendere nequaquam possunt; quam dum non intelligunt, quasi non edunt. Et quia per supernam gratiam non adjuti hanc comedere nequeunt, quasi quibusdam illam nisibus rodunt.* — St. Jerome² complains: *Caeteri absque doctore esse non possunt, quod cupiunt. Sola Scripturarum ars est, quam sibi solam omnes vindicant. Hanc garrula anus, hanc delirus senex, hanc sophista verbosus, hanc universi praesumunt, lacerant, docent antequam discant.* It is not necessary, in order to read the Bible successfully, to have studied thoroughly all these preparatory sciences. Nay, many a young man has been deterred from this study by the great array of knowledge, which he saw raised, as an unsur-

¹ Moral. XX., c. 9.

² Ep. LIII., ad Paulin. 6, 7.

mountable wall, between himself and the Sacred Scriptures, thus being deprived of the best and most beautiful study that ought to interest a theologian throughout his life.

It should not be so, my young friend. The Bible ought not to become to you an arid waste, from which the Spirit of God has fled, simply because the human mind has made of it a playground for its hypotheses and fancies.

Τεχνολογοῦσιν, οὐ θεολογοῦσιν, St. Basil once said of heretics; we could add: καὶ μικρολογοῦσιν.

Whilst trying to acquire the necessary knowledge of words, we should not forget the thought, the thing itself, the word of God; the grand connection of the biblical narrative, its uniform spirit, its elevating character, its wonderful depth must not be covered by the thick veil of text-criticism and variants, by emendations and conjectures. Herder once said: "Restrain in time the tendency to conjecture: otherwise it will run away and become untractable; eventually you will regard the healthy even as unhealthy, and always be wishing to burn and kill."

This then is my advice. Read the Bible, read it often. Read it as the Christians of old read it, as the Holy Fathers read it, unto edification and instruction. *Ama scientiam Scripturarum*, says St. Jerome,¹ *et carnis vitia*

¹ Ep. CXXV., 11.

non amabis. And St. Augustine: ¹ Quisquis Scripturas divinas vel quamlibet earum partem intellexisse sibi videtur, ita ut eo intellectu non aedificet istam geminam charitatem Dei et proximi, nondum intellexit. The Bible is a great, venerable sanctuary; approach it therefore with a pure heart, with a good conscience, with lively faith, ² and above all with humble sentiments. It is a feature of the Bible, that by its depth it ridicules the proud man. ³ Nay, the Bible is wonderfully great and holy; whatsoever things were written, were written, that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we may have hope. ⁴ The Bible is as large as the whole world; for the history of the whole world is written there, from the beginning when the world was created, to the end when all creatures will have entered into final judgment. It is, as Goethe remarks, “not the book of a nation, but the book of nations, because it places before us the fortunes of one nation as a symbol unto all the rest, because it connects the history of this one people with the origin of the world, and by a series of earthly and spiritual developments, of facts both necessary and

¹ De doctr. christ. I., 36.

² August. 1. c. I., 40.

³ August. De genes. ad lit. V., 3.

⁴ Rom. 15, 4.

accidental, continues it unto the remotest regions of the farthest eternities." Humble and insignificant in its outward appearance, it is nevertheless infinitely great and grand, and tells us marvelous things, so that, as soon as we attempt to dive into it, we cannot but exclaim: Never did man speak thus.¹ Therefore, my young friend, pray before you begin to read the Bible; "they who read the Bible, should learn not only to understand the sense of the words, but, what is *most important* and *necessary*, pray that God give them understanding."²

When beginning your biblical studies, it would be useful to get a good *perspective view* of the whole Bible, and thereby that respect and love for it, which are so easily lost among the manifold researches of linguistic and critical peculiarities. To get a good view of the whole is now of the greatest importance; to solve the more difficult questions, leave that to some future date. The reason that there is so much obscurity in the Bible, is because there is still so much of it within ourselves. Let the years roll on; for years and years you have read a certain passage, you thought you had understood it, and still you have not. At once, as it were, the veil is withdrawn

¹ John 7, 46.

² August. De doct. christ. III., 37.

from before your eyes; internal and external experiences, disappointments and sufferings, meditation and prayer, — all these have contributed to sharpen your vision. And now you read, as if you had never read before; in such a novel way, so deeply, so well, so wholly for your own self is it found written there. Now so deep and powerful, that, to use a word of St. Gregory the Great,¹ an elephant may swim therein, and then again so calm and shallow, that a lamb may ford it, thus does the stream of the word of God flow over the intellects, to give to all what is necessary to fill the wants of their souls and to nourish their hearts. It is not only the words and expressions that present difficulties, but the *things*, the great mysteries of Christianity. This is then the great blessing given to us by the Church, that the spirit which reigns in the Bible, also lives and reigns in the Church, and thus leads us unto all truth.

The decree of the Tridentine Council,² that we interpret the Bible in the sense of the Church, is not only a law unto us, but at the same time a precious benefit. St. Augustine³ already exhorts: Cum verba pro-

¹ Libr. moral., praef.

² Sess. IV. Decr. de edit. et usu sacr. libr.; cf. Conc. Vat. De fide cath. can. 2.

³ De doct. christ. III., 2.

pria faciunt ambiguum Scripturam.
 consulat (interpres) regulam fidei, quam de
 Scripturarum planioribus locis et ecclesiae
 auctoritate percepit. Thus we shall be pre-
 served from the false authority of a so-
 called science, as also from the deceptions
 and hallucinations of our own deceitful rea-
 son. "On account of the difficulties and
 erroneous interpretations of the Bible," says
 Vincent of Lerins,¹ "it is highly necessary
 to explain the prophetic and apostolic word
 according to the rule of ecclesiastical and
 Catholic faith." And St. Augustine:² Neque
 natae sunt haereses, nisi dum Scrip-
 turae bonae intelligantur non bene, et quod
 in eis non bene intelligitur, etiam temere et
 audacter asseritur. Itaque hanc tenen-
 tes regulam sanitatis, ut quod secundum
fidem, qua imbuti sumus, intelligere valueri-
 mus, tamquam de cibo gaudeamus.

When attempting to read and understand
 the Bible, my young friend, we should do
 so in the spirit in which it was written; if
 you have merely a knowledge of words, of
 syntax, of the use of words, of the time and
 place of writing — although these may be
 ever so useful and necessary — you will
 never understand the Spirit of God. And

¹ Comm, c. 2.

² In Joan.tr. XVIII., 1.

therefore I ask of you, and that in opposition to what some theologians and Bible-critics have asked in the interest of science, not the *absence* of the *presupposition*, but the *presupposition* itself of *Catholic faith*. And this exactly in the interest of science. For that is the difference between the knowledge faith gives us and the teachings of heretics; there it is *ἐπιστήμη ἀληθείας*, by preserving the norm of faith, here there are only *ολήσεις*; ¹ here *in sapientia hominum*, there *in virtute Dei*; there *in ostensione Spiritus et virtutis*, here *in persuabilibus humane sapientie verbis*. ² No, my dear Timothy, we do not begin from the absence of presupposition; we do not read the Bible as the heathens, who have not received, as we have, the grace of faith, the Holy Spirit by baptism and with it the supernatural virtues. The Holy Ghost, not our own minds, must be to us the norm and rule for the interpretation of the Bible; the Bible is His work, and He alone can, as Plato ³ once said of human writings, explain it, guard it and preserve it from corruption. What would the Bible be without Him? An hieroglyphic, about the deciphering of which men dispute, a book of riddles, which would

¹ Clem. Alex. Strom. VII., 17.

² 1 Cor. 2, 4. 5.

³ Phædr. (3 p. 274).

have for each one a different solution, a revelation which reveals nothing, because it would leave us in the dark about its contents. And, this "absence of presupposition," what is it but the greatest and most fatal presupposition, that *miracles are impossible*, and therefore, that the gospel-narrative is unhistorical.¹

And therefore the Fathers insist so much on the *guidance of the Church* in the interpretation of the Bible; for to her was given the divine gift of truth, she is the guardian of our faith and explains without error the Scriptures;² in her is to be found the *κανὼν τῆς πίστεως*;³ and therefore the true gnostic, although grown gray reading the Bible, will not deviate from the ecclesiastical doctrine. *Fides in regula posita est*, says Tertullian, and this faith, he continues, brings salvation, and without it the human interpretation of the Scriptures will not avail. Human research is but the hand-maid of inquisitiveness, it seeks to be alone regarded as scientific; but faith, on the contrary, finds salvation in the observance of the law.⁴ Therefore the *testimony of the Fathers* is of great weight to us in the in-

¹ Thus Strauss, Ed. Zeller and many others.

² Irenaeus, *Adv. haeres*, IV., 26, 5; IV., 33, 8.

³ Clem. Alex., *Strom.* VII., 16.

⁴ Tertul., *De praescr.*, c. 14: *Habes legem et salutem de observatione legis; exercitatio autem in curiositate consistit, habens gloriam solam de peritiae studio.*

terpretation of the Bible. Where they agree in a certain interpretation, we must regard it as a concordance of the successors of the apostles as guardians and judges of faith; and even if they were not bishops, nevertheless they are to be regarded as witnesses and teachers of the faith.¹ The Council of Trent places this concordant teaching of the Fathers on the same footing as the doctrine of the Church.² Fear not that science will suffer thereby; a glance at the history of exegesis will sufficiently convince you, that similar circumstances rule here, as are shown to exist when defining the relation between faith and science, between theology and philosophy. What has not a so-called science made of the Scriptures! The myth-hypothesis (D. F. Strauss) make them but mere hallucinations, the tendency-hypothesis (Chr. Baur) attempts to show that intentional deception was practised in the books of the New Testament; the fraud-hypothesis (Reimarus) places intentional deception at the very beginning of Christianity! All this, and that not at a late period, was praised as the result of serious research, and how soon was it not refuted, forgotten and so encompassed by oblivion, that the history of exegesis alone takes notice of it! The Church, on the con-

¹ August., *Contra Julian.* II., 10. n. 84.

² Sess. IV., l. c.

trary, directed by the Spirit of God, has preserved the faith and the word of God, as the apostles handed it down to her. She does not impede real scientific research, but she wishes that science should edify and not destroy, that it should interpret the Scriptures and not corrupt them. In order "that this splendid treasure of the Scriptures, which the Holy Ghost very liberally gave to man, remain not unused," she strictly admonishes the bishops, to have them interpreted.¹

And now I shall return to what I mentioned in the beginning of this letter. As a rule, our young theologians attend lectures on the "Introduction to the books of the Old and New Testament." This discipline has developed into a great and many-phased science. The attacks on the sacred books, on their authenticity, integrity, credibility etc., have made defense necessary; furthermore this science offers much that tends to the explanation of the Scriptures, as, for instance the treatises on inspiration and the canon, on the original text and the ancient translations, on the most important commentaries, and so on. I would advise you, however, before you hear lectures or read books on this science, to begin the reading of the Bible, and that not only of

¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. V., Decr. de reform, c. 1.

certain books, but of the whole Bible, and especially of the New Testament. This is not an opinion of mine only; it could therefore appear singular to you; it is the thought of the Church. She hands the priest the *breviary*, and with it many extracts from the Bible. She thereby only asks us to do, what St. Jerome prescribed as the duty of every priest, and what he demanded of the daughter of Laeta.¹ And even though she does not give us the whole Bible to read in the *breviary*, she nevertheless insinuates thereby, that we ought to read it through.

With the biblical extracts, corresponding to the feasts and seasons of the ecclesiastical year, the Church gives us in the homilies of the Fathers also the commentary, and thereby admonishes us to meditate further on the matter read and heard. It is her wish and thought, as is apparent from the whole arrangement of the *breviary*, that during the course of the year the whole Bible be made to pass before the soul of the priest, that the history of sin and of the redemption of our race, the whole system of divine deeds and graces be reviewed by him, so that his soul may thus, survey this wealth of mercy, this unfathom-

¹ Ep. LII., Ad Nepot. c. 7: Divinas Scripturas saepius lege, imo nunquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio deponatur. Ep. CVII. Ad Laetam, c. 9: Reddat tibi pensum quotidie de Scripturarum floribus carptum.

able depth of divine wisdom, and may recognize God's glory and grandeur, nay, that immersed day by day in this sea, it may be filled with holy love, holy peace and holy joy.

Now we realize what the Bible is to the priest; now the tongue of the preacher becomes eloquent, because he has tasted of these waters of salvation; now he will be able to speak words of consolation at the sick-bed, for he has heard Him, Who came to refresh those who labor and are heavily burdened; now he will sharpen the consciences in the confessional, because he has read of the wrath of God which threatens sin, and heard of the terrible justice of divine judgment.

First of all, my dear Timothy, I repeat it, you should try to obtain a good idea and a good impression of the whole Bible. Specialties and more difficult questions should be left for future study. Take some concise commentary, whenever you wish to seek an explanation on one or the other point. Tirinus and Menochius among the older, and the notes to the translations of Allioli and Reischl [Haydock's, McEvilly's and Maas's too] may now suffice you. For the present do not stop long at disputed texts, do not read many commentaries, and less still, do not try to acquire the knowledge of all the theories and interpretations that may have been invented

on some certain verse, in order to refute them, else the saying of Cornelius a Lapide may be verified in you: *Locus per se clarus est, nisi interpretum dilucidationes illum obscurum fecissent.*

Read frequently and attentively the *New Testament*; it begins with the birth of Christ and ends with the longing cry: Come, Lord Jesus! ¹ In the birth of Christ the foundation of our faith is laid, by which we have received the promise of eternal life; in the last words of the Apocalypse we have the possession, the gracious espousals of the Lord to His Church, the entrance of the soul to the heavenly banquet. You read there also of the institution and the beginnings of the Church, you behold, as it were, the apostles present, travelling from church to church, you hear their teachings, their exhortations, their warnings to the new churches, which were edified by their words, words which will continue to edify and console all Christians unto the end of time.

The New Testament however directs you back to the *Old*; Jesus Christ read the books of the old Law; may you likewise read them in His Spirit. At least read the most important ones. *Genesis* is the historical book of the whole world, the archives of all reli-

¹ Apoc. 22, 20.

gion. "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." How grand and superhumanly elevated are not these words, what a worthy foundation do they not enunciate for that masterpiece of God, which forms the end and conclusion of all divine deeds, the new heaven and the new earth, the tabernacle of the heavenly Jerusalem, the holy city of God, adorned as a bride for her husband.¹

The *psalms* are the purest natural expression of the human soul, and, at the same time, the word of the Holy Ghost placed by Him on the lips of the psalmist. Centuries have recited them, and with them have in joy and in sorrow poured out their souls. All the days of your priesthood you will recite them, united with a choir of pious priests all over the world, and every day you will discover new thoughts in them, be again renewed in them, always dive more deeply into their contents, always draw thence knowledge, consolation, strength, hope and joy. Christ Himself recited psalms before He began His passion. This would be sufficient to make us respect them.² The Old Testament closes with the prophecy of the preacher of penance, who is to come;³ the New opens with

¹ Apoc. 21, 1 sq.

² Matth. 26, 30.

³ Mal. 4, 5.

the penitential sermons of St. John. God, Who at sundry times and in diverse manners spoke, in times past, to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by His Son.¹ Read the *prophets!* They are the ones, who pointed out the advent of the kingdom of God, who more and more disclosed the divine plan of salvation, and thus testified to Christ and His mission. "I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Juda, not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: the covenant which they made void, and I had dominion over them, saith the Lord. But this shall be the covenant, that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord: I will make my law in their bowels, and I will write it in their hearts: and I will be their God and they shall be my people."²

It is not the word of the prophet alone that directs to the New Testament. All Israel was a people of desires;³ their whole history, persons and institutions, become a grand figure of the future.⁴ The universal Law,⁵ under

¹ Hebr. 1, 2.

² Jerem. 31, 32 sq.

³ Dan. 9, 23.

⁴ Rom. 5, 14.

⁵ August., Contra Faust XVIII., 7; XIX, 31; Ep. 102 ad Deo gratias; cf. Thom., Sum. I., q. 1, a. 10,

its threefold consideration as moral, civil and ceremonial Law, with its holy places, times, persons and ceremonies, with its bloody and unbloody sacrifices, which direct our minds to the great sacrifice of redemption; the tabernacle with its Outward Court, its Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, wherein stood the Ark of the Covenant, where the Shechinah, the symbol of the presence of God appeared, all these were to be a pedagogue in Christ,¹ a shadow of the salvation to come.² Thus the Law, penetrating all conditions of life, was to sanctify these, to preserve the people from all things unclean and pagan, so that it might be a sacerdotal kingdom, a holy people; thus feasts and times were to indicate the grand jubilee-year, when the true, eternal reconciliation was to be made, when everything was to be renewed.

Therefore, my young friend, let us read the Scriptures with that reverence and devotion, with which the Fathers read them, with which all pious Christians read them, with which Christ Himself read them, because they are the word of God, of Christ and of our Father Who is in heaven. Let us read the whole Bible, the *Old* and the *New* Testament, for, in Veteri Testamento Novum latet, in Novo

¹ Gal. 3, 24.

² Col. 2, 17; Hebr. 9, 1 sq.

Testamento Vetus patet, says St. Augustine.¹ The Mosaic Law stands between the Patriarchal and the Christian theocracy. And therefore it gives proof of a purity and nobility of the moral idea, of a completeness of all the duties of private and social life, of a mildness and humanity, which no other legislation of the ancient world gives. The commandment of the love of God and of one's neighbor² is the sum-total of all commandments, as the Lord Himself remarked.³ True, the wise pedagogue in Christ tolerated diverse things, "on account of the hardness of your hearts," but nevertheless the ideal was there in its germ. Do not think, however, that, in order to progress more and more in the knowledge and love of Holy Writ, you must first plod your way through the vast field of biblical auxiliary-branches. You would not be apt to finish your work in the short time allotted to your studies, and the result would be rather fatigue, and not love and zeal. Proceed here, if I may be allowed to compare the human with the divine, as you did when reading the works of the ancient and modern classics. You have read Homer's works, and been delighted with his language of nature, without going

¹ Quaest. in heptateuch. II., 73.

² Deut. 5, 6 sq.; Levit. 19, 18.

³ Mark, 12, 29-31.

into minute researches as to their age, language and author, without having read Fr. A. Wolf's 'Prolegomena ad Homerum.' With Virgil you steered over the seas and wandered through the infernal regions, and followed Aeneas, without having read Chr. G. Heyne's many volumes of annotations. At an early date in your life you began to cultivate your taste and style by reading the works of our classic writers; you had a taste for the beauties of language of Bossuet, for the grand tragic of Shakespeare in 'Hamlet' and 'King Lear,' without having toiled through long biographical, critical and literary-historical dissertations on these authors. Do likewise in regard to the Bible! First of all, let God speak to your soul through His word, by reading chapter after chapter, book after book. You will soon experience, that the word of God has not lost its power over your heart.

Higher exegesis, as it is taught in the schools, treats of only a small portion of the whole Bible. But, as I remarked before, the Church wishes that we priests should read the greater part of the Bible in the course of a year. And furthermore, a perspective of the whole is necessarily weakened by such learned apparatus, by critico-hermeneutical, chronological, archaeological, philological excursions, the connection is not clearly grasped, the

spirit, at least as is seen in some exegetical manuals, disappears behind the letter, the word of God is hidden by the word of man. There is a wise remark of St. Augustine, to which I wish to draw your attention: Erit igitur divinarum Scripturarum solertissimus indagator, qui primo totas legerit notasque habuerit, etsi nondum intellectu, jam tamen lectione Cujus operis et laboris prima observatio est, nosse istos libros, et si nondum ad intellectum, legendo tamen vel mandare memoriae, vel omnino incognitos non habere.¹

Do not think, my young friend, that, by what I have said, I should wish to do away with scientific exegesis, and that I am in favor of only a so-called edifying interpretation of the Bible. By doing so, I would place myself in *opposition to ecclesiastical tradition* and the decrees of the Church, which are precisely what I have laid down as the rule for biblical interpretation. Origen, St. Jerome and St. Augustine treated questions of a linguistic and critical nature: St. Thomas minutely dwelt on the different meanings of the biblical text, and the greatest doctors, as Santes Pagninus, Bellarmin, Salmeron, Sixtus of Siena, Serarius, and others, have exercised their mental powers on those

¹ De doctr. christ. II., 8. 9.

questions, which since the beginning of the last century are known under the name of 'Introduction to the Sacred Scriptures.' I should likewise fail against the teachings of the Fathers and the sense of the Church, were I to vindicate for the Bible that clearness, which the Protestants claim. St. Jerome finds fault with those, who imagine themselves able to understand the Bible without a teacher. *Haec a me breviter sunt perstricta, ut intelligeres, te in Scripturis sanctis sine praevio et monstrante semitam non posse ingredi.*¹

But this ought not to retard you from reading the Bible in humble faith; ² you will understand much, even if not fully, and much will remain obscure to you. Be consoled and edified by what you do not understand; at an opportune time you will perhaps understand the meaning of obscure texts also. Not in vain has wisdom ³ set forth her table filled with delicacies, and called all to eat therefrom, each one according to his capacity and need. It behoves the theologian not to pass over obscure texts, even if it were only on account of those who distort the Scriptures and take from them arguments for their erroneous doc-

¹ Ep. LIII. Ad. Paulin, c. 6.

² Aug., De doctr. christ. II., 8-9,

³ Prov. 9, 1,

trines. When by constant reading you have become familiar with the Bible, you will be in a condition to study the auxiliary sciences with greater profit. I shall give a resumé of my letter by quoting the following words of St. Augustine: "First of all we should try to obtain a knowledge of the sacred books, even if we do not understand them; we should read them and try to impress them on our memory, so that they may not be altogether unknown to us. Then we ought diligently and accurately to take notes of that which is clearly stated therein and which perhaps contains regulations for our life or dogmas of faith; the more acumen one has, the more will he find to note. For whatever has reference to faith, to our moral life, to hope and love, is found in clear terms in the Bible. And after we have become somewhat familiar with the language of the Bible, we ought to proceed to the explanation and comprehension of obscure texts. Obscure expressions are to be explained by clearer ones, and doubtful ones by those that are certain." ¹



¹ De doctr. christ. II., 9.

LETTER XXII.

Church History.

Fr. v. Schlegel once made the following striking remark: "History is a divine epic, and the historian a prophet, with his eyes turned backward." This view holds good, however, for the religious knowledge of history alone, which received from revelation the idea of a grand, harmonious world-plan of God, Who through the various phases of man's development, leads him on to his eternal destiny. The beginning and end of all history are placed by Christianity in the full light of truth before the eyes of man, and thereby irremovable guide-posts are set, converging toward the central fact of the world's history, — the Incarnation of Christ, from whence the paths lead backward to the creation and forward to the consummation. We find a grand thought in the work of St. Augustine, 'De civitate Dei,' the thought namely of an harmonious plan of the world's history, the education of man in and by history. At the beginning and end of creation he found the irremovable guide-posts for the construction of a correct philosophy of

history; he exposed the threads which connect both ends of the world's life in the plan of God. According to him, history begins before the history of this world, in the region of spirits, where a kingdom of evil, of Satan, tries to assert itself against the kingdom of good, of God; the contrast or struggle becomes obvious here on earth in the fall of man, and is developed further by Cain in opposition to Abel, the child of God; it is further obvious in the governments of Babel and Rome in opposition to Jerusalem, the holy city of God, built by the hand of God. In this holy city Christ dwells, Who for this reason forms the acme of Jewish history as well as the center of all history, and Who continues to live and labor in His Church, the new kingdom of God, until the struggle will have ended, Babel will be conquered, and the holy city Jerusalem will appear in its splendor, and this earth will have become rife for transfiguration. And above all Providence rests, which, calm and immovable as the sun in the heavens, consigns everything restless to itself and therefore to self-annihilation; for evil is not truthful and will never develop into being. And everything that wends its way toward Providence, will be nourished and taken care of by it and directed and attracted toward it. Wm. v. Humboldt

could not but testify to this when he wrote: "The world's history is unintelligible without a world-government."¹

This view of the world, having its root in Christianity, formed the essence of the philosophy of history among Christian nations up to the beginning of the eighteenth century. The chronologists even did not deny this, for they began the history of the cities which they were about to relate, with the creation of the world and of man; they first gave a sketch of sacred history, and then only began to tell of the things they intended to relate. This gave history a deep, spiritual background; it knew how to look at everything *sub specie aeterni* and to order everything accordingly; the exterior organization of society received from it meaning and support. Viewed from the standpoint of revelation the world's history was no more the work of blind fate or of human speculation, stratagem or power; the history of man before Christ acquired meaning and importance as a wandering of sinful mankind through this land of penance and longing; the fortunes of the individual as well as of nations found their explanation in God's counsel and man's liberty. Thus the nations appear no more as a confused mass, but as the members of a great, single family, destined

¹ Ueber die Aufgabe des Geschichtsschreibers, p. 18.

to enter into the Church, the kingdom of God on earth, to be elevated into a current of higher spiritual life, and to be led unto their final destiny, — their deliverance from sin and death, and ushered into eternal bliss.

From what I have said you will understand that a *philosophy of history* is possible *only* when *founded on revelation*, the history of which is visible in the *history of the Church*, the word 'church' being taken here in its widest sense. It is only of late, since the Christian mode of thinking was placed in the background, that the historian's sight has been dimmed and almost totally lost as to the connection of the events and the sum-total of the history of the world. Eventually there remained nothing of the grand harmonious whole as brought to view in the history of the world, but the indefinite, obscure idea, — humanity, which may mean everything or nothing. And even this word has been disowned by the materialistically inclined historians, and Herder has already cast aside the universal terms, sex and mankind, as "mediaeval metaphysics." The former attempts to prove that the absolute reason (Hegel), the spirit of the world, is the moving agent of the historical process, have failed, for the *ego*, the free personality, with all its fortunes and sensations, will not be devoured by the all-

engulfing monster of the spirit of the world. The other theory adduced as the fundamental idea governing the world's course namely the development *in infinitum* of mankind, does not give satisfaction. For "it always remains a curious fact," as Kant observes, "that the older generations seem to have done their tedious task for the benefit of the later ones, in order, namely, to prepare for these a step from which they could rear higher the building intended by nature; and that these last were to have the good fortune to live in a dwelling, on which a whole line of forefathers (without their intention, it is true) had labored, without being able to participate in what they had prepared. Although this be ever so mysterious, nevertheless it is, at the same time, a necessary conclusion, if we have once admitted, that a certain species of animal is endowed with reason, and, as a class of rational beings, all the individuals of which die, although the species itself is immortal, attain to a perfection of the development of their faculties." Lessing had tried to solve this difficulty by the assumption of a migration of souls, and thereby unwittingly tried to solve one enigma by another.

Conscious of the impossibility to get in this way a satisfactory insight into the course of the world's career, they have especially empha-

sized pragmatism, i. e., the proof of the intimate union of cause and effect. Facts, as we get them from history are only *solitary* and accidental, and therefore their causal-connection alone can be recognized, which is the external one, not the internal one and the true one; and least of all shall we be able to extricate from these solitary facts the history of the *whole*. For the question always returns, why has all this happened in a certain period, with a certain people, why has it not happened otherwise? Or is the world's history so composed of mere contingencies, connected by causality, that it could have taken another course, if other contingencies had happened? That these have not happened, and why not, pragmatism fails to answer. And therefore the father himself of pragmatism, Polybius, finds the last ground for the development of historic life not in such contingencies, but, in a "*higher, divine fate.*"

Buckle and his successors, when writing their "History of Civilization," did not blunder by trying to find certain laws in history. Their blunder consisted in this, that they asserted the *natural necessity* of these laws and left no room for the liberty of man. According to them the powers of nature make history; history is absolutely controlled thereby; culture-development is silenced by such

theories. "Science," says one of them, "has withdrawn the veil which held the future obscured, and has beheld the end of mankind. Although in an infinitely distant future, but infallibly, nevertheless, organisms and man will disappear with the consumption of carbonic acid and water. The struggle of the forces of nature and the elements, the struggle for existence among animate beings will eventually cease. Then the earth, robbed of its atmosphere and animal life, will circle around the sun as it always has, but then in moon-like emptiness; mankind, however, its culture, its struggling and striving, its creations and ideals have existed. Wherefore?"¹ This 'wherefore' precisely shatters to pieces his mechanical world-view. For the intelligent mind alone asks — wherefore? Consequently, neither a construction of history *a priori* according to empiric or psychological pragmatism, nor the method of the natural sciences, holding a cast-iron necessity of the laws of nature, can introduce us into the spirit of history. Why not? Because we can only then get an insight into the universal connection of all minds, when we ascend to the highest mind, from whom alone all created minds have gone forth, and towards whom all, on account of an intimate kinship, strive.

¹ Fr. v. Hellwald, *Culturgeschichte* II., 726.

Thus the necessity of a deeper comprehension of history leads us to God. Himself free, and respecting the freedom of man whom He created, He directs the course of events, strengthening and guiding the willing, overcoming the stubborn. The most comprehensive of His divine acts, determining and penetrating the whole world and its history, is the *Incarnation* of God. This fact, first of all and alone, makes a *history of the world possible*; for in Christ mankind became aware first of its *unity*; with Him the view of the historian, which formerly ranged only within the narrow limits of one country or people is widened. Therefore *Church history* is so intimately connected with universal history, therefore Church history becomes the *soul* and active principle of universal history. You see, my young friend, we come back to what St. Augustine said. All attempts to obtain a harmonious world-view, are futile, if we close our eyes to the inner side of universal history; exclude this inner side, and universal history will remain a book, closed by seven seals. Why all this, we should be obliged to ask, why this great amount of sufferings, which like a flood overflows man, why this constant change of birth and death, of blossom and blight, this constant struggle without peace, this peace without true satisfaction?

You have read Tacitus, and know therefore the angry words he utters concerning degenerated mankind, and his despair in the victory of truth and of right; he sees in the course of history a chaotic confusion only, out of which there is no outlet. In his eyes man is but the "plaything of the gods."¹

Man could never have obtained an insight into the ways of history; he was consequently obliged to receive instruction from above through revelation, in order to find a solution of the enigma. Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of the world, also withdrew the veil, which for so many thousands of years had covered history. He came to found a kingdom upon earth, His kingdom, whose outlines were drawn from the beginning by the Father, which was to be carried out in the centuries following Christ by divine Providence and man's freedom, when His truth was to give testimony of itself, His grace to be efficient, His sanctity to become more and more apparent. But man opposed the counsel of God; God permitted him to go the way he had himself chosen. You know, my dear Timothy, the road sinful man has trodden, the long, fatal road of sin and crime, groping in darkness and endeavoring to feel after Him or to find Him,² Whom in days of old he had

¹ Annal. III., 18.

² Acts. 17, 27.

forsaken. God left to man the choice between good and evil. By His commandments He endeavored to check the abuse of his freedom, but nevertheless permitted it, still ordering everything so, that it would conduce unto good. The evil will of man had to feel the might of that higher power, which guards the eternal, moral order against all sacrilegious assault. The evil, which man willed, has come upon him, and history bears testimony unto all the sins which have covered us with misery and death. Then the Son offered Himself as saviour; for, as St. Athanasius¹ says, man was made according to His image, and it was by Him and according to His image that he was to be regenerated. And thus there runs through history, parallel with sin, a stream of grace, a system of divine words and deeds, of institutions and revelations, of holy persons and actions, from the beginning a sacred history, from which universal history first derives its import and significance. This sacred history had before Christ essentially an instructive preparatory character; Christ traverses the history of the ancient world in His word spoken to the prophets; by His commandments, which kept the people free from pagan intercourse and rendered them more conscious of their sinfulness,

¹ De incarn. Verbi, c. 1-8.

438 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

and clearly pointed Him out to them; by the holy actions, which, by virtue of His future merits, bestowed grace. After the plenitude of time had arrived and Christ had become man and appeared among us, there flowed from Him, as from a fountain of living water, light and love, strength and grace over all mankind. In the Old Testament it was the mission of history to prepare man for the reception of Christ; now all history is nothing else than to drink more and more from Him, penetrate ever deeper into the mysteries of His blessed life on earth, assimilate them more thoroughly, and show them forth in the life of the individual as well as in that of society.

Thus there is established the most necessary and at the same time, the most simple division of history, the history *before* and the history *after Christ*. "Thither and hither history proceeds" says Hegel correctly. With a few words the apostle¹ describes the history before Christ: "Because that, when they knew God, they have not glorified him as God, nor given thanks, but became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened. For professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. And they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of the image of a corruptible man, and of birds

¹ Rom. 1, 21-24.

and of four-footed beasts and of creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up to the desires of their heart unto uncleanness, to dishonor their own bodies among themselves." Thus the world is before Christ; man denies God, the things that are God's, and places his will above the will of his and the world's Lord; thus he fled the light and threw himself into the hands of darkness; sin, punishment, death was his lot. But the natural image of God, and with it the longing for something better, as it once was and will again be some day, this was indestructibly impressed on his soul, this the heirloom he had still kept, though absent from his father's house. And future redemption had been promised him by the very speech that announced his doom.¹ The whole history of mankind up to Christ shows us the preparation for this redemption. And when God descended in His Son and assumed humanity by becoming man, by being born from the Spirit and not of polluted flesh, then a new center was established, whence all roads again led upward, from the depth unto on high, from exile unto our home. Thus was born in Christ a new generation; the obedience which man had denied his God was tendered by Him, by His being obedient even

¹ Gen. 3, 15.

unto death. Thus He restored to God that honor, of which sin had robbed Him, and satisfied for the ancient crime. Thus He became the guide and model for mankind regenerated by Himself. Now the seed of the new, regained salvation has taken root, now it has ever grown more powerful.

Thus history *after* Christ becomes the history of Christianity. It has everywhere distributed new powers, and created new conditions of life, permeated with its spirit the whole life of man in its height and depth, and been triumphant, although amid continual combats with Judaism and paganism. Thus the whole history after Christ is nothing else than a carrying out of the eternal world-plan of God, which leads him who is of good will to his blessed end, and compels him, who would be stubborn to enter its service. True, the different phases of the growth of the kingdom of God may have different characteristics — primeval Christianity, the period of the Fathers, the Middle Ages, modern times, — essentially, however, it is the self-same, a divine edifice among men, in which there is offered to Him by Christ the highest sacrifice, alone worthy of Him; and every pious prayer and every good deed and every mortification, offered up in union with the sacrifice of Christ, is a stone, destined for the

further upbuilding of this structure, and, at the same time, an act which will never pass away. True, the struggles are manifold, under which the Church must tread her way through history; and be the names of her opponents ever so different and their weapons ever so various, Gnosticism, Arianism, Mohammedanism, Byzantinism, Pseudo-Reformation, Revolution, essentially it is always the war of Babel against the holy city of God, the ethical contrast, evil, which, at one time, calls false dogmas as its allies, at another, seeks refuge under political power, and again, intoxicates the nations by granting them full license in gratifying their passions, or promises them god-like self-glory.

Thus we understand, as much as it is given to us, the import and significance of sacred history and also of universal history. God sets the warp of this texture, man's liberty forms the woof; thus history is man's work and nevertheless also God's work. As the case stands with the individual, so does it stand regarding entire nations. An illustration of this is found in the *Israelites*. The true Israelites, in whom there was no guile, the clean, choice blossoms of this people, God attracted toward Christ and made of them the cradle in which the new Church was to be rocked; the others, whose minds were bent

on earthly things and who closed their eyes to the light, these He hardened and disinherited and cast out among the nations.

Now, my dear Timothy, you will readily understand the position and importance of church history in its relation to the Christian's historical study in general. The world's history is not church history — as little as the world, even the Christian world is the Church —, but they are intimately connected. St. Chrysostom stated a truth when he said, that the whole world was created only for the Christian Church; but the world must first enter into the Church, the Church must leaven the world. Universal history is the representation of all the events as they occurred in the life of mankind; church history, on the contrary, narrates only the events as they happened in the Church of Christ. The church historian, however, can not possibly ignore universal history; for it is precisely the Church, from which, as from the soul in a living body, higher life spreads over human society; from hence the light, that Christ brought down to earth, casts its rays to the uttermost regions; here is the place, where the hand of God reaches down into this world and holds it, that it perish not in the night of infidelity, sin and shame, as it did in the days before Christ.

Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian. 443

And vice versa universal history exerts an influence on church history. All vicissitudes, fates and events in the life of the world will bring about new conditions for her; the Church is not of this world, but she is nevertheless in this world, and established for the benefit of this world. True, the Church cannot undergo a change either in her essential constitution, nor in her doctrine, nor in her essential forms of worship, nor in her dogmatic discipline, in a word, what is divine in her, given to her by Christ and guarded by the Holy Ghost, will always remain the same; but, like the heavenly leaven, it must leaven the mass of mankind; the divine mustard-seed must grow in the course of time, the sown seed must grow and bloom and yield fruit. In this sense she is subject to change, in as far as her growth is more or less impeded by hostile powers. We find likewise in her doctrine, worship and discipline a kind of change, a development, a progress, and therefore history; heresies necessitate the Church to formulate her doctrines more precisely; science endeavors to draw further conclusions from the principles of revealed truth, and thus to grow more and more in the knowledge of Christ Jesus; new wants call for new forms of worship, of discipline and of ecclesiastical legislation; the Church enters

into the various phases of human life, guiding and blessing them and permeating them with her spirit. In this sense, my young friend, we speak, and that correctly, of a history of revelation, and especially of a history of Christianity and of the Church, as of a system of divine deeds which have historically happened, and constituted history and are therefore history in an eminent sense. Keep continually before your mind the parable of the mustard-seed. Who among Christians or pagans could have surmised, except in the case of a special revelation, that this mustard-seed of the Church would grow to be a mighty tree, extending its branches in the course of years, under which so many nations would find protection?

Therefore we may aptly describe church history as the history of the growth of Christ in mankind, through the Providence of God and the liberty of man. And for this very reason, because the liberty of man must be subject to the guidance of God, progress or decay will take place; in the life of the individual as well as of nations there will be found contrasts and struggles. God's path goes through history unto the safe goal, no human power can withstand Him.

Now, my young friend, you will understand in what spirit you are to study church history, and what are to be the fruits of your

studies therein. I spoke to you before of the so-called absolute want of presupposition, with which a scientist is to approach his work. It was Strauss who uttered this, especially concerning biblical study; but in his later years he openly avowed, that, with regard to questions of Christianity and faith, there is no such a thing as the absence of presupposition. We are not treating at present of the history of Egypt or of India, which has no importance for our religious life or moral activity, but we are treating of the highest thing there is, we are treating of the work of God in the world of man, of Christ and His word, of faith and infidelity, of eternal life, of eternal bliss and eternal reprobation. From the center of Christianity alone shall we gain a correct insight into all the surroundings; from that point of view alone shall we understand, what God has given and what man has done; from thence alone will this our many-phased life be ordered into an harmonious whole, permitting us to surmise the Spirit of God, Who ordered it. Where faith illumines the way before us, light will be thrown also on history; where there is no faith, we shall never get beyond a low pragmatism; to our minds everything will become a chaos, and church history will sink into a "chronique scandaleuse," a romping-

place of dark hallucinations, of human passions and lies.

Yes, my young friend, it is precisely the Christian and Catholic standpoint which enables us to seek, recognize and acknowledge the truth in all the events of history. The infidel is necessarily partial, for he has decided against God; the Church is not partial, for to her belongs the whole world; she is certain of her divine mission and of her eternal duration; whilst, at the same time, she recognizes error and sin among her members in all callings and positions as the fate of all human things, upon whose dark background the divine operation of grace looms up the more brightly. What is therefore designated as the work of the historian: "critical study of the authentic documents, impartial view of the subject, objective narration, to put before one's eyes the whole truth,"¹ — this is precisely what in church history the Christian historian alone is capable of attaining.² How can a "philosophical view of the critically assorted matter"³ be possible to the infidel, when his philosophy

¹ L. v. Ranke, *Analekten der engl. Geschichte*, p. 114.

² E. Zeller, D. F. Strauss, E. Renan consider the "essence de la critique" as "la négation du surnaturel." Thus Renan: *Études d'histoire religieuse*, Paris, p. 137.

³ H. v. Sybel, *Gedaechtnissrede auf L. v. Ranke*, *Hist. Zeitschr.* v. 56, p. 476.

consists in the denial of revelation? Such an historian is utterly incapable to view the documents correctly and as a whole; much less will he be able to give them to us unadulterated. No, my young friend, you will not go amiss, if you consider the *position* of the historian *toward religion* as an *essential* factor in the "philosophical view." Sooner or later, at least in its final decision as to their worth, after the facts have been ascertained from the documents, historical research enters into the field of religion. And consequently there remains for the Church historian only the dilemma: Either all this has been ordained by the hand of God, or it is an eternally inexplicable riddle.

You should take another thing into consideration, my young friend. He, who stands on a high tower, sees those who walk in a labyrinth; he sees the wrong ways they take and knows also the true outlet. But those who are in the labyrinth, do not know it. Thus the church historian alone can correctly know and realize the history of religions before and out of Christ, as also the history of all false religious and political systems, of all sects and heresies. For Christianity has unveiled to our sight the idea of the true religion in its whole purity, and has thereby given us a rule, by which

to test them; this we apply to them to separate the erroneous from the true. Thus only in the light of Christianity and of its history can we obtain the knowledge of the non-Christian religions and philosophical systems in their peculiarities. But this is not all; Christianity has been victorious over all these false systems, over all these false religions. Thus we get acquainted with its divine power, and ascertain that here alone the waters of life ooze forth, and that beyond it there is only a desert, sterility and death. I indicated to you in the beginning of this letter, that a philosophy of history is possible only in the light of faith in God and in Providence, that in it alone can a Christian world-view be gained, that only by it it is possible to penetrate into the spirit of history; this fact is likewise a proof of the existence of God, and ought to be more insisted on than it has been. The same feature holds good for church history. Nothing proves more evidently and intelligibly the divinity of Christianity, than its history of almost two thousand years; the more we ponder over this fact, the more we examine the guidance of its divine vital power in all directions, in science and in life, in state and society, in moral and law, in the sanctuary of conscience as well as on the great arena of

this world, everywhere we behold the blessed guidance of the Church, the seal of her mission, which is of God.

Although in this light church history is an essential branch of Christian apologetics, nevertheless it is also the source of highly spiritual contentment and edification. On every page of the history of the Church we find written, if we would but open our eyes, the Lord's consoling words: "Have confidence, I have overcome the world."¹ There have been times when the waves seemed about to engulf her, when she appeared to be nearing her end. Paganism and Judaism, schism and heresies innumerable, the mighty of this earth, false science and tricky politics, all these have risen up against her. All this was destined to conduce to her benefit, was sent to arouse new energy, new zeal, and was to break off the rotten limbs, that the trunk, full of life, might grow the better. At an opportune time God raised up men for His Church, from whom a mighty impulse went forth, who by word and example attracted many to themselves, and breathed into such as lay in a death-like stupor, new life; such men were the saints, doctors, popes and kings.

This gives me an opportunity to express a wish. The future belongs to our youth; per-

¹ John 16, 33.

haps among the younger generation there will be found one, who will fulfil it. It took a long time before the old way of writing history was forsaken and the present one adopted, namely of dwelling on universal human life in art and science, in morals and customs, in religion and worship, in society and family, in a word, on the culture-history of man. We were accurately informed about war and peace, about battles and victories, about state-transactions and treaties; but we did not learn to know man, man himself, as he thought and lived. The same was until lately applicable to church history. Christian life, as expressed in the lives of the hermits and monks, as portrayed in the various and manifold forms of worship, in science, art and poetry, in the economical, social and spiritual line in general, in the discipline upholding the whole life of Christians, in the splendid edifices of Christian charity, in the development of public instruction, in the care for the widows and orphans, in the grand examples of Christian piety, Christian brotherly-love, Christian heroism so well depicted in the acts of the martyrs; all this was hardly mentioned. At present we can point to some great works in this line, such as: Hefele, "*Beitraege zur Kirchengeschichte*", "*Conciliengeschichte*"; Theiner, "*Geschichte der geistlichen Bildungs-*

anstalten''; the various new works on the ancient Christian churches; Binterim, ''Denkwuerdigkeiten''; Ratzinger, ''Geschichte der kirchlichen Armenpflege''; the exemplary later works on the history of the sermon; the miscellaneous writings of Wiseman on the different ancient Christian customs, processions, pilgrimages, the veneration of relics etc.; the history of Catholic hymnology and drama by Goerres, Simrock, Pfeiffer, Schlosser, Vilmar, Mone, etc. Perhaps the time is not far distant that will give us a *Catholic history of culture*.¹

Once before, my young friend, I remarked that paganism had only a popular history of the Greeks, Romans, etc., but not a world's history. This is possible in Christianity alone, because it has taught us the unity of the human race, its one end, its one destiny. The Greek knew only Greeks, the Roman only Romans. In Christianity was first heard the word, which ''never passed the lips of a Socrates, or a Plato, or an Aristotle'': ''*man-kind*.'' ² A true and correct culture history is likewise possible only in the spirit of Christianity, in the light of its development in the Church. The Church it is that has spread ethic-religious culture, and therefore

¹ G. Grupp, ''Culturgeschichte des Mittelalters ;'' likewise J. B. de Rossi, ''Roma Sotteranea.''

² Max. Mueller, *Essays*, II. v. p. 5.

encouraged culture-life in the highest sense. She alone it is that has the promise of eternal duration; no other power, be it ever so noble, outside of her has it. As often therefore as the hordes of barbarians laid waste countries, she it was that always ploughed anew the arid waste and opened up schools of discipline and morality for the degenerated peoples. This is therefore the consoling lesson we are to learn in our studies in church history, that, when the impending dangers of the future come upon us, it will be the Church, which, for the second time, will save us from destruction, impart to us hope in despair and life to the sick unto death.



LETTER XXIII.

The Holy Fathers.

I closed my last letter as you know, with the wish, that soon there may rise up men, who would write a history of Catholic culture. Happy beginnings have already been made; in all the fields of learning the building-stones must first be gathered; clear-sighted, penetrative minds will then properly place them one upon the other to build up an harmonious edifice of Christian culture.

A goodly amount of the work lies already before us in the *works of the Fathers*. It is now asked that they be made use of not only in their dogmatic bearing, but also as regards their significance for the whole culture-life of their time, which we may take cognizance of from their writings. They portray to us the fortunes of the Church, her influence and her doings among the nations, as well in the life of the individual as in that of the state, in the sanctuary of the priest as in the workshop of the laborer, within the narrow pale of the family as in public life. We see in their writings a series of pictures, portraits of

centuries, in which they place before our eyes whatever is grand, splendid, holy in the Christian world. Dogma and morals, Christian manners and laws, all that I have before described as Christian culture-life, we find represented there. True, all they teach on faith has been collected and carefully arranged in dogmatico-historical works; true, the heresies they refuted, have been attentively examined and dwelt upon; true, the times in which they lived, their social and legal conditions have been told us by the historian; but, my dear Timothy, that is only one or the other of the many things they have said, and what is it compared to the living word they address to us in their writings? We imagine we feel the breath of their spirit, we see them present, we hear their voice. There everything becomes so tangible, everything stands as if engraved before our mind. As the voice reveals the man, so does the real and deepest life of Christianity and of the Church rise before us in this so immensely rich, manifold and highly characteristic literature, and we feel, as it were, the breath of the spirit, that pervades those centuries, as if we were able to read into the hearts of those great men, who, by the power of their faith, the nobility of their aspirations, the energy of their will, in the midst of a decrepit world

created a new kingdom, a new civilization, — the Christian civilization. We must allow them to teach us, to render us fruitful; in constant spiritual intercourse with them we should endeavor to acquire that correct view of the spirit of Christianity, that sound judgment, that genuine spiritual view of the Church, that pious sense, which will preserve us not only from one-sided subjectivism, neology and sensationalism, but also from stagnation and literalism.

It is often only necessary to read a few pages of one of the Fathers, in order to be impressed with grand thoughts, as if chiselled in capital letters on monuments of stone, whilst so much of the literature of our day appears to us to be but hasty scribbling on a leaf of paper, which may at the next moment be blown away by the wind. No one who has read these works will be able to restrain his astonishment when he sees, in the midst of political corruption and social dissolution, when eunuchs reigned and barbarians flooded the countries, men of such extraordinary genius building up a kingdom, which stood and flourished, whilst the greatest powers had to succumb. In them *dogma* does not become a dead letter, but a deed of the inner man, the spiritual foundation of all their thoughts, the formula for their whole

456 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

God-view and world-view. In them the Church becomes the spiritual atmosphere, in which they breathe and live, a new world, which they the more gratefully welcome, the greater the misery of paganism and sin, in which they the more cheerfully live as "new-born men," since they recognize in her "the house of God and the gate of heaven." The Greek youth were fed intellectually on Homer; historians, philosophers, poets were nourished by him and appealed to him; religious belief received its shape and universally accepted form from him; his narrative was a model unto all his successors. Without Homer there is no insight into Greek poetry, no understanding of Greek art. The same holds good regarding the Fathers. As Grecian life went back to Homer, so here everything truly Christian must draw from this fountain, drink from it and immerse its intellect and heart in it as much as possible. Here we become great and strong by intercourse with the great and the strong, here we learn to view everything from the innermost center of faith, in the light of Jesus Christ; we learn to refer everything back to Him, to permeate everything with His spirit, doctrine, life, thoughts and deeds. Here we learn to carry on the holy wars with them against error and sin, and especially against the

heretical corruption of the highest goods of faith. They did not despise the educational treasures of antiquity, as I have already shown you in a former letter; and for this very reason they were capable of viewing and esteeming from the elevated standpoint, on which Christianity had placed them, the heathen world, and to place their intellectual accomplishments in the service of Christ; they also realized their own poverty and misery of soul and experienced it in themselves. Those who had sat partly in the darkness of paganism and the shadows of death, those who had welcomed the light, that had arisen to them in Christ, with such rejoicing, how would they not esteem the grace of God! Therefore they used in these combats the whole power and acumen of their intellects, the whole energy of their ardent souls. Their courage should steel our courage, their enthusiasm, their self-devotion to the cause of God should encourage us and powerfully animate us. In addition to this, their presentation of Catholic doctrine, so simple and yet so convincing, so subtle and yet so clear, so significant and correct, has become the model for all later ages. Nay, in the treatment of certain dogmatical questions, for instance, St. Athanasius on the Incarnation, or Athenagoras on the resurrection of the

body, their successors can hardly add anything essentially new.

For this reason the study of the Fathers is so important for us; they received the first-fruits of the Spirit, Who ever and ever lives and reigns in the Church. And therefore we theologians, no matter what course of theological studies we follow, always draw from them; and when the study of the Fathers was neglected, the age was intellectually sterile. It is then on subjectivism, on the philosophy of the day, on the current of thought of a particular period, that the theologian becomes dependent; he must then go to strangers to seek ideas, because he has forsaken the rich inheritance willed to him by his fathers, and, not knowing their worth, has despised them. The study of the Fathers has had the same misfortune as mediaeval theology and philosophy. Years of most powerful intellectual work and of deepest penetration in scholasticism and mysticism were forgotten by the great majority of men; it had to be, so to say, discovered anew. Modern times first have reopened those shafts, caved in for so many centuries, where the veins of precious ore meet our eyes, and pure, clean gold is brought to the light of day.

In fact, would the Reformation have been

possible, if Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, etc., had known and read the Fathers? Not only dogma, but *bible-interpretation* also must go back to the Fathers to find precious pearls among their treasures; indeed, the Bible was the object of their constant meditation, the reading of it their most important occupation, its interpretation, for very many, the work of their lives. It is said of St. Chrysostom, that St. Paul himself taught him; we should therefore take him as our guide for the better understanding of the Scriptures. Modern times may have collected much learned material for the interpretation of the Bible, which we do not find in the Fathers, or perhaps not in such a degree; but the spirit, which breathes in their writings, the original power of faith, which made them so congenial to the word of God reflected in them as in an excellent mirror, this no learning, no industry in collecting can replace.

Were I to speak of the *rules of Christian life* laid down in their writings, or of their regulations for the apostolic pastoral office, I should have to mention all the Fathers. Their importance for *moral theology* has been indicated in a former letter, and the wish has been there expressed, that their works should receive more attention and careful perusal from moralists. They not only laid

down regulations, they were, moreover, splendid models of apostolic pastoral care, and some have fulfilled in themselves the words of our Saviour: The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.¹

As to *sacred oratory*, of which, according to some, there is so little found in the Fathers, I have in my work, entitled "Aphorismen"² shown the fallacy of such a view, and have there likewise expatiated on the importance of the study of the Fathers for the furtherance of sacred oratory. In this branch also they are models and teachers for us, and what St. Augustine said of the Scriptures, may also be applied to them: The poorer one beholds himself, the more should he try to enrich himself by them, and if his own words are insignificant, he should strive to become great by their testimony.³

Thus, my young friend, the works of the Fathers, passing down from the oldest times through the writers and teachers of the Church to our own time, form a chain, connecting the present generation in vital continuity, in thought, tendency and life, with the first centuries of the Church, and even with the apostles. Be therefore now convinced of this,

¹ John 10, 11.

² p. 110.

³ De doctr. christ. c. IV., 5.

and you will find it proved and confirmed when you grow older, that there is hardly a truly elevating, Christian, fertile, and piety-generating thought to be found in the whole compass of theology, which has not, although perhaps in different form and in another connection, been expressed by the Fathers. These are all there, we must only find them. I will close to-day with the words of St. Augustine: *Neminem puto fore, qui offendatur audiens, Ecclesiam a sanctis Patribus discere, eorumque sensum inquirere. Licet enim Ecclesia Dei semper est eadem, semper viva, semper vivens et florens, semper veritatis custos ejusque bene conscia, etiam absque ullo scripto, membra tamen Ecclesiae, quae nunc in toto orbe terrarum dispersa degunt, veritatem revelatam discunt tam viva voce, quam ex Sacra Scriptura et sanctis Patribus, quum in illa apostoli et discipuli Domini multas veritates ab Ipso traditas reposuerint, in his ipsa Ecclesia semper eadem docens audiat. Eo igitur sensu Ecclesia a sanctis Patribus discere recte dicitur.*

What I said on a former occasion of the history of German literature, I wish it to hold good also regarding *patrology* and the *Christian history of literature*. Do not imagine you have done enough by attending lectures on patrology or patristics; on finishing these there

will remain in your mind but a nomenclature, a series of names and dates, and a superficial indefinite and unreliable judgment of the individual Fathers. You should endeavor to acquire a good, general view of the Fathers; add to this, however, the study of a single work, or of a few of the principal works of the greatest Fathers. Read at first but *little*, and that *thoroughly*; dive into this one volume, let what is true and great therein exert an influence over you. You cannot have familiar intercourse with these intellectual giants, without at the same time being intellectually educated. Seriousness, dignity, warmth, love of Christ and of His Church, will pass over to you and give your words that special unction, which flows from them; for they have received the first-fruits of the Spirit from the Lord.



LETTER XXIV.

The Care of Souls.

In the foregoing letters I dwelt on different branches of theology; but what is the object of all this, what is the final, the highest, the real object of your studies? God's glory and the salvation of souls; and keeping this ever before you, you will save your own soul. Save your soul — why save? Is it, then, in danger? If not, why, then, does the Lord admonish us, saying: "Watch!" Why then does the apostle say: "Be sober and watch, because your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about, seeking whom he may devour."¹ The Church calls our vocation of care of souls, a militia, a spiritual knight-hood; she places us into the world to watch over the holy people; she puts the weapons into our hands and exhorts us to combat manfully and courageously against the enemy. Woe to us, if we desert our post, if we fall asleep, if the enemy overcome us! The priest must watch, and blessed is he, whom the Lord, at His coming, finds watching!² Thus our

¹ 1 Peter, 5, 8.

² Luke 12, 38.

whole earthly, sensible life is a night-watch; the light of faith shines upon us in the dark, we warm ourselves in the cold winter-night of this our life at the fire of love, which the Son of Man brought down to us. At ordination the bishop covers the head of the one to be ordained with the amice;¹ it is the symbol of silence, of separation from this visible world, of total mortification of this sinful life; we see no more the splendor of its colors, we hear no more the enticing sounds of its music; the temporal is forgotten, and the mind is immersed in the eternal, and brings forth fruit unto eternity. Therefore the bishop gives such a one the maniple, “per quem designantur fructus bonorum operum.” And therefore also the Church calls the priest’s vestments, vestments of beauty and of joy; for the priest’s life is one of sacrifice, and every sacrifice is beautified, transfigured, deified; the enjoyment of this world drags us down to the level of the brute; sacrifice makes us like to God; enjoyment nourishes egotism, and all egotism is hateful. The priestly vestments are vestments of joy; it is a joy for the saints who have overcome the world, a joy for the blessed who see that the sacrifice has been offered and that the heart rests in God. Therefore the bishop says to

¹ In ordin. Subdiac.

the newly-ordained: Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum! But, my young friend it is not splendor, nor fame, nor enjoyment, nor possession alone that is a temptation to the priest; there is another, far greater, less noticed, but more dangerous because always effective, and that is the force of everyday habit. Gradually he begins to forget the invisible and to cast his eyes on the visible. And yet the invisible, the spiritual, the immaterial, is everything, the visible, as such, is nothing. The form of this world passes away. This is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent;¹ everything else is death and has only the name of life. Whenever you hear the word, "spiritual father," remember well its import. That which is spiritual is alone certain of an eternal duration; but everything human is born of dust and will return to dust. The world regards our life as a life of sorrow,² but this sorrow will be turned into joy. It is rather joy already, because there flows in the heart, removed from the world, a fountain of heavenly joy. My dear Timothy, we must, all of us, work, struggle and suffer; it all depends for whom we struggle and suffer; there is so much unfruitful

¹ John 17, 3.

² Wisd. 3, 2; 5, 4.

work, and so much despondent, hopeless sorrow. Even the best joy on earth, if it be this only, will soon be changed into sorrow, in fact, it bears already the stamp of sorrow; the thought that it is but fleeting, is the bitter drop mixed in every cup of joy. If the sun of a pure strong love of God holds sway in your heart, it will cast its rays, blessing, sanctifying, elevating and beatifying, over your whole vocation; it will be apparent in your eyes and attract the hearts of men toward you; it will cast its light-giving, illumining and warming beams upon all poverty and misery, so that to you likewise may be applied the words: *He went about doing good.*¹

Yes, that is our mission, to do good, but in an eminently higher sense than worldlings ascribe to the term. The office of the priest is a pastoral office, after the image and by the power of the supreme pastor and bishop of souls² Himself, Jesus Christ; he is to heal the wounds which sin has inflicted on the soul, he is to penetrate it with heavenly powers, he is to bring to it life and the abundance of life.³ Nay, not only by virtue of the command of Christ and according to His example must the shepherd

¹ Acts 10, 38.

² 1 Peter 2, 25.

³ John 10, 10; Hebr. 13, 20.

watch over the sheep; it is *Christ Himself*, Who watches through the priest and ever and ever continues to hold the office of shepherd. In Holy Orders He has impressed His seal in the souls of His priests, and deposited there His powers, and made them the visible organs of His priestly, prophetic and royal office, which He continues in them and by them unto the end of days. Where the priest teaches, there Christ teaches in him; where the priest offers up the sacrifice, there Christ sacrifices through him; where the priest directs and governs, there Christ directs and governs by him. This explains, my dear Timothy, the respect which laymen pay to priests. "He, who honors the priest, honors God" was a saying of our ancestors. And truly, what Christ did when He breathed upon the apostles and infused into them the Holy Ghost, His spirit, the same the bishop does evermore, when, placing his both hands on the head of him who is to be ordained, he says: "Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." It is Christ Himself Who in a mysterious way unites Himself by the sacramental character for ever to the priest, dwells forever in him, distributes grace and salvation through him. This explains

the words of praise which the Fathers use when speaking of the priesthood; and for this reason we should, as St. Ignatius exhorts, behold Christ in the priest;¹ hence the honorable titles with which the priest is addressed, and which are intended not so much for the priest, but rather for Him, Who dwells in the priest. Thus the priesthood in its different orders and divisions is the visible appearance and representation of Christ and of His whole activity, from Whom, as the branches from the vine, the members of the whole body of the Church receive supernatural life, so much so that the whole Church is called by the apostle, not only the body of Christ, whose vivifying soul He is, but Christ Himself;² Christ in mankind, and mankind in Christ, one flesh and blood with Him, the millions of redeemed of all ages one body — His body.

Thus Christ is the foundation, energetic principle, form and end of Catholic pastoral care: to shape all and to transfigure all into the image of Christ, so that every Christian may become a second Christ.³

You will now understand what the Church

¹ Ep. ad. Ephes. 6, 1.

² 1 Cor. 12, 12; Ephes. 5, 30.

³ St. August., In Joan. tr. XXI., 8: Ergo gratulemur et agamus gratias, non solum nos Christianos esse, sed Christum.

demands of the priest; in order to understand this, read in the Pontificale Romanum the prayers at ordination. And all holy Fathers, who have done so much for the people of God, demand the same as she does. When St. Augustine had been ordained a priest by Valerian, bishop of Hippo, and had considered the great responsibility of his calling, he asked for a little time to go into solitude, in order to prepare himself by prayer and study for the ministry. Then he wrote: "Above all I pray you to consider, that at the present time and in this life there is nothing easier than the office of a bishop, priest or deacon, when administered without earnestness and with flattery toward men, but that before God there is nothing more abominable, more lamentable and blameworthy. There is nothing more difficult, more full of cares and more dangerous than such an office, and at the same time nothing more replete with blessings, when it is administered as the Lord requires."¹ This is the conclusion to which all have come who have considered what a heavy burden was to be laid on their shoulders; they deemed themselves too weak to bear it, the responsibility too great, which they were about to take upon themselves, and they trembled at

¹ Ep. XXI. ad Valerianum c. 1.

the thought that they would one day have to give an account of their stewardship. The more highly they esteemed their high office, the deeper did they fear to fall. They besought with tears that so heavy a burden be not imposed upon them; they fled, they hid themselves, and only the visible, indubitable will of God could induce them to accept an office, which they deemed too heavy even for angelic shoulders.¹ St. Jerome hastened into the solitude of the desert Chalkis, in order to be responsible for his soul only, and when Paulinus had ordained him a priest, he dared not offer up the Holy Sacrifice.²

What did not St. Gregory of Nazianzum do to escape his elevation to the priesthood? He writes in his celebrated work "*De fuga sua*": The decisive and principle reason was this, that I thought it something exceedingly great to direct human souls: since it is very hard for man to learn to obey, it must be still harder to be obliged to command, and this especially in our office, which has its foundation in the law of God, and leads to God; the greater the height and the

¹ Paulinus, *Vita St. Ambros.*, c. 9: Proditur et adductus Mediolanum (Ambrosius), cum intelligeret circa se Dei voluntatem, nec se diutius posse resistere, postulavit . . . , a catholico episcopo baptizari.

² Adv. Joan. Hierosol. c. 41; cf. Ep. XIV. ad Heliod.

greater the dignity, the greater will also be the temptations. The priest's character ought to be spotless; everything in him should be pure as gold; for otherwise the evil will be the greater, the greater the number over whom he holds sway; for the sin is greater, when it passes over to many, than if it merely remained enclosed within one's self. For cloth is not so easily colored by the dye in which it is immersed, nor do odors spread so rapidly, nor does pestiferous breath infect the air so readily and poison everything, as inferiors follow the bad example of their superiors. Herein the evil far surpasses the good; for there is nothing easier than to imitate evil; nothing is more rapidly accomplished than to grow more wicked, even if we have no guide unto evil. To acquire the virtues however, is difficult, although virtue has much to attract and invite us."

"But," he continues, "I know not, whether it be sufficient for him who directs others unto virtue, merely to keep himself free from every stain of sin; for of him, who has assumed this duty, it is required not only, that he be not wicked — for to be such is regarded by the masses as disgraceful—but also that he excel in virtue and lead others on by his virtues. He should not set a limit to his virtues and to his constant spiritual pro-

gress, but he should deem what is still wanting to him therein as a loss, and always strive higher and not esteem it something great and praiseworthy, if he surpass the multitude in virtue. He should judge of virtue in the light of the eternal laws of God, not in the light of the opinion of men, and not make light of virtue, which is of God, from Whom every thing proceeds and to Whom every thing returns. He should reckon it a sin for his inferiors to do something shameful or punishable, and a sin for the superior, not to be better than others and not to progress continually in virtue, because by the influence of his example he will then draw the multitude after him."

"And granted, that such a one be free from sin and perfect in virtue, with what science must he not be endowed, and what power must he not feel within himself, to assume fearlessly such an arduous office? For indeed, to lead men is the art of arts, the science of sciences; it is his duty to give wings to souls that they may fly out of this world up to God; to preserve intact the divine image, if it be still present; to guard it when in danger, to restore it when lost, to direct Christ by the Holy Ghost into the dwelling of man's heart, to deify man whose origin is from on high, to prepare him for

eternal felicity. This the teaching of the Law indicates, the prophets require, and He also, Who is the fulfilment of the Law, and its perfection, Christ Jesus; the emptying of His divinity, His incarnation and union with mankind demand this. The work of the redemption was for us men a remedy, a spiritual cure of our illness, in order to restore the old Adam to the condition from which he had fallen. And we, the elders of the Church, are the servants and assistants to this cure. If now it be something great to know our own faults and diseases and to heal them, it is something still greater and more glorious to purify others and to cure their diseases.”

“What struggles are not awaiting us, and what art is not necessary, to cure satisfactorily, to amend life, to subject the earthly to the spirit! For the talents and inclinations are different in men and women, in old and young, in rich and poor, in sorrow and joy, in health and sickness, in superiors and inferiors, in the bold and the timid, in the meek and the irascible, in those who stand and those who have fallen. What difference between the married and the single! And among these what a difference between those who love solitude and those who are fond of society, between those who lead contemplative

lives and those who tread the path of duty only! Again, what a difference between the educated and the ignorant, the simple and the shrewd, business men and those who lead a life by themselves, between the poverty-stricken and those who are always well off in this world! All these classes of men sometimes differ from each other yet more by their dispositions and inclinations, than by their external appearance and manners.”

“Since then, neither the same remedy nor the same food can be given to all, and one needs one kind of food, and another another kind, according as he is sick or well, so also the souls are cured by different remedies. Some are led on by words, others by example, some need to be spurred on, others to be restrained, some deserve praise, others blame, but both at the opportune time, otherwise it would do more harm than good. Some are brought back to their duties by admonitions, others by reproofs, and here again some privately and without witnesses, and others publicly; some despise the admonitions given in private, but are brought back to the sense of their duty by public reproof; others again lose all sense of shame when censured in public, and are more easily corrected by a reprimand in private. With some you must watch even their smallest and most insignificant faults, because

they would otherwise become puffed up and suppose their sins to be unknown and hidden; with others again it is necessary to pass over some things, because, pressed down by our continual admonitions, they would lose all sense of shame and become more reckless in their sins. With some we must, as it were, get angry and yet not angry, so to say, ignore them and despair of their salvation, and yet not ignore them and despair of their salvation, just as the nature of each one requires. Others again we have to cure by meekness and kindness, by gladly hoping that they will amend. We must conquer some and be conquered by others, rejoice with some in their good fortune, and console others in their distress. No single remedy will effect a cure for everyone; some may be cured by a certain remedy, others by the exact opposite, just according to time and circumstances or as required by the habits of the sick.”¹

I have dwelt at length on the thoughts of St. Gregory on the office of the priest. They are not words of yesterday or of the day before, they are voices that have sounded through a thousand years and have found an echo in the soul of every noble priest. Read also the six books of St. John Chrysostom “On the Priesthood”, and the four books of St. Gregory

¹ Orat. II. De fuga sua, c. 9 sqq.

the Great on the “Regula Pastoralis”. You will find that the same thoughts recur in them. You will understand that these are not the private opinions of certain individuals, but that it is the spirit of the Church which speaks in them, which has spoken through the course of so many centuries, which has instructed so many holy priests, zealous pastors, pious shepherds, and strengthened them, and rendered them zealous in their work. Thus those saints thought, spoke and acted, who, fearing the burden of pastoral care, at first fled therefrom and then, knowing it to be the will of God, subjected their shoulders to it, and now shine as lights in Holy Church. These are they, who, faithful to their calling, stood steadfast unto death at the approach of the storms of persecution, the heroes of their faith and office, whose souls trembled not in the thick of the battle, who, with undaunted courage, like St. Chrysostom, went into exile and unto death. They feared not persecution, but they dreaded the dignity of the priesthood; they fled not from their enemies, but they fled and hid themselves from those, who wished to adorn them with the dignity of the priesthood.

Let your eyes, my dear Timothy, be constantly fixed upon these holy men, these great Fathers of our Church, Sts. Augustine,

Jerome, Ambrose, Gregory the Great, Gregory of Nazianzum, Chrysostom; let their words be your doctrine, their life your model, their undaunted courage your strength in the dark hours of your priestly career. They deemed themselves weak, but God strengthened them; they considered themselves poor in sacred science, but God enlightened them; their virtues appeared to them to be deficient, but God gave them the spirit of holiness. They heard God's voice, they knew their calling; God will also make your life eloquent and strengthen your heart with power from above.

Fear not therefore when about to enter this stormy, dangerous world. The Lord sends you, He will not permit you to go alone; His grace will accompany you; He will send His holy angels to lead you, to guard you, so that you may walk in simplicity and piety in the way He has marked out for you, and which all holy priests that have gone before you have trodden. You go, not because flesh and blood induce you, but because He has commanded you, because His voice has called you and you have answered from a pure soul and with a willing heart: "Lord, here I am, what wilt Thou that I should do?" He will hold His hands before your eyes, that you may not behold the vanity of the world, that you may not look to your right nor to your left to see

478 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

things which might allure you or frighten you, that you may not court the world and its praise, which would entice you and make your heart foolish. Let your eye be always pure and clear, to look up to God, and your ears turned inward, to hear the quiet testimony of your conscience, which is of greater value than the loud praise of the world. Forget not that many dangers surround you, that destruction is vigilant, and that you are always treading on the brink of an abyss, that this world is wicked and that Christ has pronounced His "woe" over it. You know, at the same time, that He is with you, and you with Him; therefore fear not! He led Lot out of Sodom, and saved Daniel out of the lion's den, and kept Joseph chaste in the house of Putiphar. He will also encompass your heart with a high, invisible wall, which the enemy cannot surmount. There are many enemies who lie in wait on your road, but there are also many powerful hands to assist you. God has given you the sword of faith, sharp and powerful, on which the weapons of the adversary will be broken to pieces. He has shielded your breast with the armor of justice, which repels all temptations. He has covered your head with the helmet of salvation and your loins He has girt with the girdle of purity, that there may always dwell in you the virtues of self-denial and chastity.

You wish to become a priest according to the heart of God, my young friend; you will be one, for God does not regret His promises. Live only in Him, live only for Him; He has given you the desire, He will also grant you its fulfilment, for His grace imparts power to the weak.

But, my dear Timothy, how can I in my poor language speak of all that is grand, noble, glorious and blissful in the ministry, how can I describe in words the greatness of your responsibility and of your heavenly reward? How shall I direct and instruct you in the many and diverse duties of your office, for which there are not wanting rules and regulations, but where the spirit must vivify all, where without the spirit there is no blessing and no fruit? Our times have given us many good pastoral theologies; but, my young friend, books alone will not suffice. The school likewise is not sufficient in this matter; life can proceed only from life; such an eminent activity, springing from life and penetrating into life as the life of the minister of God, can be learned correctly and fully only from him who leads this kind of life and has for many years labored in the ministry.

The *Catholic parsonage* is therefore the real, the *best school*, in which to learn and practise the arduous task of the pastoral care. The

dioceses of Germany [the same may be said of our American dioceses] are not poor in men, to whom you can look up to with respect and love, in priests, who have borne the burden of their office with patience, with dignity and with blessing, who, rich in experience, and proved in many things, can be to you safe guides and teachers. Subject yourself to such a one with that love, confidence and obedience, which only a young priest's heart is capable of, viewing in him the model, which should be yours for the future. What good fortune, to be allowed to live with such a man, to learn from him the art of arts! Such a one is well versed in sacred science, but he is a man of life, not wholly engrossed with his books; he himself once traveled rough roads among the hills, over precipitous ways and through deep snow, in icy wind and under a tropical heat, by day and by night; he has often stood at the bed of the dying, in the hut of the poor as well as in the palaces of the rich. He was weak with the weak, and childlike with the children, without debasing his dignity; he is a counsellor unto men, a protector of the forsaken, a consoler of the afflicted, a help to the poor, and the best Catholics of the parish esteem him. He has encountered opposition, suffered persecution, but his heart has not been embittered; he suffers that and is silent.

Go with him to school; how simply and yet how ingeniously, how comprehensibly and yet how deeply does he not explain the mysteries of our faith to the children! The love he bears them makes his mind ingenious and his mouth eloquent. How vividly does he not portray the Child Jesus to these little ones, and awaken gratitude and love to Him in their little hearts! Consider him when in the pulpit. An unction pervades the whole man, become gray in the service of God; his very appearance preaches; he has just finished his prayers in his room; the spirit of piety hovers over his head and rests on his countenance. What a lesson for you! His sermon is short, his thoughts few, but grand, his words simple, but they go to the heart.

If at the beginning of your career you meet with great difficulties whilst hearing confessions, then turn to him and learn from him. He has a wide experience, in his own life as well as in that of others; guided by him you will be able to clothe with flesh and blood the teachings you have learned in class. He knows the life in the country and perhaps also that in the large cities; he knows the dangers, the temptations, the moral misery both here and there. His words will warn you against too much confidence, and against distressing suspicion; he will moderate your

overflowing zeal, and also lift you up, when deceptions of all kinds oppress you.

Observe him in his intercourse with the world. Strict with himself, he is not puritanically strict with others; Christ is to him not a hard taskmaster, but He, Who has said: "Come to me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."¹ There is that in his words, in his conduct, in his very being, which makes the Church in whose service he stands, which makes Christianity reverent and amiable. His zeal is not bitter, his firmness not stubborn, his positiveness not provoking, his seriousness not gloomy, his cheerfulness not undignified. And above all he is a *man of prayer*. Let his occupations be manifold and the duty of his calling be ever so pressing, prayer is still more pressing to him. Learn of him that prayer is as the breathing of the soul, from which the soul receives all its power, that it is as a dew from heaven, which fertilizes all its actions.

My dear Timothy, I repeat, with thanks to God, that our dioceses are not poor in such men; may Divine Providence direct you to one of them. More urgently should I wish, that the diocesan authorities would seek such men, in whose hands to confide the young priest, where a second school would open to him, as important and as necessary as that one was, which he leaves after his ordination.

¹ Matth. 11, 28.

LETTER XXV.

Catechetics.

The words of the Lord, spoken to the apostles, are a law also unto you as regards your activity in the ministry. "Going, teach ye all nations, baptizing them." As He called the apostles, so also He called you, and prepared you for your high office; in His prayer before His passion He also invoked the blessing of the Father upon you, and He will likewise at Holy Ordination sanctify you and send you forth to preach the gospel to every creature, this gospel, which we accept from the teaching Church, as if we received it from the mouth of the Lord Himself. Since He sends you, be not afraid; the apostles did not fear. He will also prepare the way and level the road for you into the hearts of men, when, at His word and in His name, you cast your net.

The foundation of the temple of God in the soul, God builds by your hands in baptism and by the Christian instruction and education of youth. Knowing its necessity, the Church has inculcated catechetical instruction under threats of severe punishment.¹ Men,

¹ Conc. Trid. Sess XXIV. de reform. c. 4.

were they even most gifted and most holy, cannot lead souls to God; God alone can do that; you are only an instrument in His hands. What is then the duty of the catechist? The apostle has already told us: "My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you."¹ The regeneration of souls — what a grand, what a noble work! Hegel once said: "One single thought of the human mind stands higher, and has more worth and significance, than the whole inanimate universe." A sensible saying! There lies in these words a much deeper sense than philosophers surmise. How great must not the soul be that thinks the thought; and what worth has not a single soul! Its thoughts can and should thank God, know Him, praise and adore Him, and in this adoration the whole world finds its goal and perfection. And this soul is capable to receive within itself a new principle of life and love, — *grace*. Now its thoughts are no longer human thoughts, they proceed from a divine root; they are the thoughts of God Himself, which the soul thinks according to its capacity; it is something divine which was given it, which lives and loves in it, which, loving its origin, desires and strives again for it, in order to

¹ Gal. 4., 19.

become one with it, and in this union to be blessed in God through love.

Thus the soul stands not only elevated above the whole visible creation, but also above the realm of natural intellectual life. It has become God's son and the brother of the son of the eternal God, the heir of His glory, and the spouse of the Holy Ghost; an indescribable, supernatural nobility has been imparted to it, a superterrestrial light has been shed over it. So beautiful and God-like has it become, that the heavens reëcho with joy, as often as a soul receives the garment of grace from God, which makes it God-like and worthy to sit at His side on the throne, and to participate in His glory.

As high therefore as heaven is above the earth, so high does the realm of grace stand above that of nature. And as in nature His providence prepares all ways, and leads everything to perfection, so in the supernatural order predestination sends out its messengers, to do what He commands, and to perfect what He has ordered. So God sends you first and above all to the souls of children, that you may baptize them, instruct and educate them for heaven. And this vocation calls essentially for *three* things: humility, love, patience. Judged by the eye of our natural reason, what an insignificant thing is not a

child! Weak in body, weaker still in mind; our wisdom cannot admire it, our learning cannot be astonished at it. How different and how much more fruitful does not a sermon appear to us, delivered before a large congregation, which listens to our words, and before which we can unfold all the powers of our eloquence! A glance at the gospel will make us blush for shame. "Suffer the little children to come unto me,"¹ our Lord said. In these words He has revealed to us the great importance of catechetics, and has given us an example. Shame on us, if we should hesitate to imitate Jesus! And they, who heard His words, were obedient, "they brought to Him young children, that He might bless and pray over them."² And for this reason the greatest doctors of the Church, her grandest intellects, stepped down from their learned chairs, and gathered the little ones about them; a Gerson found consolation in this, and wrote a beautiful book, "*De parvulis ad Christum trahendis*"; from St. Augustine on, who wrote "*De catechizandis rudibus*", throughout the centuries, Churchmen have always regarded catechetics as the first and most important duty of the ministry. In the eyes of the world it is often considered an insignificant function, but how great is it not in the sight of God!

¹ Mark 10, 14.

² Mark 10, 13. — Luke 18, 15,

“And if I had gained but one single soul,” St. Ignatius said to those who disapproved of his gathering the children about him, “I should think myself immensely rewarded.” He knew the worth of a soul; he realized this precious pearl, which the world knows not how to esteem; and as he did, so all the saints have done.

And now, my dear Timothy, consider that a child is not merely what it appears to our corporal eyes. This child, this little child, is a sanctuary; for our Lord Himself was a child and has impressed the seal of God’s image on its brow. Over this little child, in the waters of baptism, you are to pour the grace of the Holy Ghost, and with the white garment to clothe it with justice; God Himself wishes to make His dwelling in this child’s heart, and its angel always stands before the throne of God.¹ He, who receives one such little child in the name of Jesus, receives Jesus; but woe to him who scandalizes one of these little ones, who despises one of them.²

Catechetics is a work of *love*. “For, if you have ten-thousand instructors,” says St. Paul,³ “yet not many fathers.” And even these words he does not deem sufficient to express the tenderest, the most intimate rela-

¹ Matth. 18, 10.

² Matth. 18, 5.

³ 1 Cor. 4, 15,

tion to his children in Christ; he wishes to be as a mother unto them, that nurses her children in love.¹ The catechist must not only instruct, he must *educate*; he must not only bring the understanding of the Christian doctrines into their little minds, but he must also teach them to lead a Christian life. No instruction however, no external rule of life, no reward, no punishment will so inflame the hearts of children with love toward the Saviour, and thereby urge them on to imitate Him — and in this consists the whole art of education — as when the children see that the catechist himself loves our dear Redeemer and the children entrusted to his care, when they perceive that he loves them as a shepherd loves his sheep, who calls them by their names, guards and protects them, and even dies for them. In this matter children have a penetrating eye and a susceptible heart. Love God and your children; your children will then love you and God in you. Such a love is ingenious; it discovers a thousand means and ways to reach a child's heart; it is eloquent, even if the lips move not, and delivers them willingly into our hands, that we may lead them to the Lord, in order to receive His blessing. The child's love is formed by what it sees; this is a danger

¹ 1 Thess. 2, 7.

and at the same time a great gain; love it, and it will love you in return; your example, your piety, your being impressed with the mysteries of our holy religion will draw it with you. St. Augustine relates that, as a boy he had noticed, that his teachers were vainglorious. How penetrating is not the eye of a child! How quickly will it not notice our coldness, our carelessness, our want of love of God and of our vocation! Its mind is soft as wax and flexible; whatever it sees in the first years of its development, is deeply and lastingly impressed upon it; the pictures, impressions, it has received in these years are stronger than all later ones, and are never forgotten. Children are not susceptible of anything so much as of love. A dark brow, a sinister countenance repel a child and lock its heart; it loses confidence in its teacher, and confidence is the first requisite of education. A wrong impression will last, and Christian virtue itself will appear as something dark and hard. "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things."¹ He who loves children

¹ 1 Cor. 13, 4-7.

will have a vigilant eye for everything that is disagreeable to them or that may bring them joy. He will remove the disagreeable, and foster the cheerful. He will therefore not make his instructions too long, especially in winter, when the body of the poor, oft scantily-clad child, who perhaps comes a great distance, is cold. When in such a condition, the child longs for the end of the instruction, and pays little attention to what is said. Acting thus, you will not attract the children to Christ, you will rather render that which they ought to love, a hard and disagreeable task. To force little children to sit quietly and listen for hours, is a sin against nature.

Charity is *patient*. She beholds not in the child the natural man, but the work of grace. To quote something from St. Chrysostom: as the sculptor spares no pains and cuts the marble with hammer and chisel, and carves out of it feature after feature until the beautiful human face is finished; so likewise does he do, who works on a far more precious material, who is to form the human soul, to make of it a pure, noble likeness of God. It is an arduous task for a child to keep its attention fixed for a long time on one subject. The catechist, therefore, should not force nor tire it by asking too much of its tender mind. One of the principal mistakes

made by catechists and by educators in general, is, that they find fault too much, that they become irritated by the mistakes of the children, instead of having compassion on them. The mind of the child soon associates together the sinister teacher and the virtues he inculcates and the doctrines he explains; and conceives antipathy against both, instead of love for them; many a child is thereby made stubborn, hypocritical and deceitful. It is therefore sometimes better to pass over small failings, until the opportune time comes, when the child itself easily and spontaneously sees its own faults.

Therefore we should not reprove the child on the spur of the moment, because both the child and we ourselves are then irritated. It is then and there difficult for the child to see and confess its fault; wait a few days, and then, of its own accord it will acknowledge it; at least the heart of the child will then be better disposed to receive our admonition. There is nothing by which a teacher loses respect with children more than when they see him act hastily and passionately, whilst, on the contrary, nothing increases it more, than when they see in him a model of patience. Self-control, necessary under such circumstances, elevates him in the esteem of the children; his patience proves to them that he is acting

out of love, for their benefit, and not through anger. Again, we must never reprove a child without adding a few words of encouragement; this will serve as an expression of love for the child, and a sign of hope for its amendment. Never to say a word of praise, is cruel; indeed, the apostle himself praised the churches he founded, and thereby made his blame the more effective. Praise, but do not flatter; praise enlivens and encourages, flattery renders effeminate and weak. We cannot educate a child by fear alone; if the children are clever, we thereby encourage and induce them to obstinacy; if they are soft and weak, we discourage them. Cheerfulness and confidence should always be the dominant tone in our children.

“In your patience you shall possess your souls”¹ says the Lord; and in patience you shall also possess the souls of the children entrusted to your care, and by them your parish in the future. These children will be men some day, and they will never deviate from the path they have trodden in their youth, even if they reach old age.²

You see, my young friend, it is a highly important calling, the calling of a catechist, and immeasurable is its reward. In these

¹ Luke 21, 19.

² Prov. 22, 6.

children the future congregation is entrusted to you; you yourself, or surely your successor will reap the harvest, which you have sown. The ground is prepared and loosened for your teaching by the nature of the child's soul as God created it, so open, so susceptible, so grateful; the furrows have been made by the grace of holy baptism, by the rule of the Holy Ghost in its heart; you have only to sow the seed with both hands.

You may well ask me, what special points you are to consider in your catechetical instruction. A few remarks will suffice.

Among so many questions agitated of late, the catechism-question is one. The defects of old text-books have been insisted on, theories on how to write a good catechism have been set forth on every side, and new catechisms have been introduced in different dioceses. I do not ignore the importance of a catechism; it forms the skeleton on which the catechist builds up the body of Christian doctrine; its words are impressed on the memory of the child, and it contains the sum-total of the whole Christian faith. Yet it is not the catechism that instructs and educates the child; it is the *personality* of the catechist that does this. It is on this that everything depends. He will, if he be zealous and experienced in his calling, teach

the children the word of God with clearness and precision, in an attractive and winsome manner, despite the defective catechism. If he cannot do this, then the best text-book cannot substitute the living word, the power of personality. For this reason we should not try to change and correct the catechism, which the superiors have prescribed, nor put it aside in order to substitute our own supposedly better thoughts, nor, least of all, attempt to write an extra catechism for our congregation. Utter confusion would be the necessary result.

In learning, the memory is that intellectual faculty which must first of all be cultivated in the child. Cicero remarked: *Thesaurus mentis memoria*. I spoke, when treating of the preparatory education of a priest, on the necessity of exercising the memory. The child must learn the catechism by heart, and the catechist too, for how could he expect the child to do so, if he himself neglected this duty? I feel therefore obliged to admonish you to use a compendious catechism, and to lay aside those that are large and diffuse; only the precise, complete and exact word is easily impressed on the memory and, at the same time, forms the starting-point, to which he can always return in his explanations. The catechism should not, how-

ever be learned only mechanically, but so, that what is necessary, should be clear to the child. Our old Canisius was a master in the art of saying much in a few words. But it must be learned; you will sometimes find clever but lazy children, who would rather give the meaning of the answer in their own words, than verbatim as it is in the catechism. Never allow this! Such children will never exert themselves; and furthermore, even if they render the meaning of the catechism correctly, but have it not verbatim in their memory, they will soon forget the meaning. Who does not know, how the short morning and evening prayers, the prayers before and after meals, the angelus, etc., which we have learned at school or from our parents, have always remained impressed on our mind, and form our sweetest prayers, despite the many things we have learned in after-life?

As regards the method of instruction, I can say all I wish in a few words. Since pedagogy and catechetics have become a favorite branch in our higher schools, much has been said and written on the *method* of catechetical instruction, whether it ought to be acroamatic or in the form of a dialogue, whether heuristical and socratical, or in the form of a connected discourse. Many rules and prescriptions have been laid down on the manner of questioning.

I do not wish to dispute the utility of these regulations in general; but I am inclined to apply the words:

Reason and good common sense,
With little art approves itself.

It would be much easier to lay down laws for a speech, than for a catechetical question; here exactly pedantry according to established rules would be the greatest evil; here the mind must move freely; individuality in the child brings along with itself its own law, and the eye of the catechist must learn to find it, to judge of it, and to treat it. It is evident, however, that a catechetical instruction without asking questions, is fruitless or almost so. St. Augustine gives the reason for this¹ in these words: "We should convince ourselves, whether the scholar has understood us, and just according to the way he answers, we should arrange our further instruction, by either speaking more plainly, or going more fully into the subject, or by solving some difficulty, or by simply continuing the explanation." To this may be added, that by questioning we keep the children continually attentive, whilst in a connected discourse they would hardly be able to follow, and that questioning induces them to reflect. If I a moment ago insisted on the necessity of questioning, I did not

¹ De catech. rud. c. 13.

mean to say, that the child is to find out by itself the truths of religion, but, that by questioning the child will acquire a better understanding of faith, will find out how to grasp the connection, and how to make the application of the teachings of religion to the life of a Christian. I should like to refer to another kind of questions. There are also questions to be put to the *heart* of the child, which it should answer, but not to the teacher, nor in public, but to Christ and its own conscience. Who has not experienced, how such questions, put to the child in all the seriousness of the thought of the presence of God, of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, have brought it to its senses and often also to tears!

I now come, my dear Timothy, to a fact, which, during the reign of rationalism, breathed upon catechetical instruction a poisonous breath, and robbed it of power, effectiveness and life. This was done first in Protestantism in the last third of the eighteenth century, when rationalism entered all the branches of its theology, and especially of practical theology, pedagogy and catechetics; thence the spirit of the times scattered many a dangerous seed in the garden of the Church; and to become aware of this it suffices to peruse some of the catechisms written since

Canisius. An attempt was made therein to bring children to faith by reason, and to explain the truths of religion rationally as much as possible; these persons forgot entirely that they had not pagans, but Christian children before them, who had been baptized and were already believing, who had at home learned the essential articles of faith and the practices of a Catholic life. They argued and demonstrated before these little ones, as if they were philosophers; they spoke to them of the existence and essence of God and of their duties; these were deducted from reason, and every kind of temporal happiness was promised them, if they lived accordingly. The great mysteries of our faith were thus forced into the back-ground; for, they said, the little ones will not understand them. In order the better to explain this, I shall relate a fact of my own experience. Once there was handed to me a manuscript of a prayer-book for children, that I might pass my judgment on it; among other things it contained a meditation for every day of the month. The children were supposed to meditate on the duty of gratitude, love of parents, diligence, cleanliness, temperance, not to be jealous or envious, and thus there were described thirty-one kinds of duties, one for each day of the month. The arguments were taken from

reason, the advantages of doing one's duty and the injury and disgrace of its non-fulfilment, and a bible-text was given here and there as an illustration. With such dry, insipid, awkward morality the child was to be tortured every day! When I referred to the mysteries of Christianity in which we ought to instruct the children, by the meditation of which they would so easily, naturally and directly make the application themselves to their own lives, I was told that that was too high and unintelligible.

This opinion is wide-spread, but is absolutely erroneous. Nothing tires children so much and makes them dull and obstinate as continual moralizing; the more bold will soon find pleasure in bringing counter-arguments against those of the teacher. And why should they not? Being only human arguments, taken from reason, why should not the child feel tempted also to try its own reasoning? Therefore we do not sanction the so-called heuristic method; rationalism alone can attempt by ingenious questioning to elicit from the mind of a child the truths of faith.

All teaching of virtue, not founded in the faith of the child, is comparable to a slip planted in the sand, which will not take root. God has so created the soul of the child, that it confidently approaches its teacher, and the

500 Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.

Holy Ghost in its heart, Whom it has received in baptism, urges it on to believe everything that God has revealed and the Church proposes through the catechist to be believed. It is precisely the mysterious, the wonderful, that will attract the soul of a child. And why? Because there is inborn in it the sense of things supernatural, eternal, infinite; and therefore it is so open to instruction, whenever you speak to it of divine things and of God; your words will descend into it as the dew-drop descends into the calyx of a flower. Our soul, particularly the yet unspoiled soul of a child, has a desire, a longing, an appetite for God. The pagan, Dion Chrysostomus¹ says, that in all men there lives a great longing to worship and adore the gods. As children, torn from the arms of their mother, have an indescribable longing for her, and often stretch out their tiny hands toward her, although absent, and dream of her, so does man likewise desire to be always with the gods and to converse with them. The infinite comes before our minds as something incomprehensible, mysterious, wonderful. To this we add another remark. Are the mysteries of Christianity abstract theorems, obscure riddles, words, the sense of which we know not? Not at all. Christianity is history, is a fact,

¹ Orat. XII., 27.

is truth; it is eminently history, plastically, visibly so, as no other history hardly is. The divine Child in the manger, Jesus in the house of His parents, among the teachers in the temple, feeding the hungry in the desert, healing the sick, raising the dead, commanding the winds and the waves, Jesus on Mt. Olive, on the cross, rising from the dead, ascending into heaven—all this is eminently historical, and so edifying, so vivid, that historical painting can not find a better theme, nor ever will. The “*Biblia Pauperum*” of the Middle Ages, which represented the sacred mysteries in pictures, which painted them on walls and chiseled them in stone, educated the illiterate and the people, who had no books, surely not less, than many a catechist with his heuristic method. And have we not even up to the present day this historical, pictorial representation of the mysteries of our Lord’s life? The manger, erected by the Seraphic Saint in the forest of Greccia, was not less an effective sermon to the faithful than his love-inflamed words, spoken on the occasion. And who is ignorant of the popular devotion of the way of the cross, which so powerfully stirs up our devotion and penetrates our heart and mind, so deeply, at the sight of the fourteen pictures, with the mystery of the passion and death of the Saviour?

502 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

Thus our religion, as its center, the redemption, is a history in history, it is a system, which traverses all centuries of the world's existence, which powerfully influences it, reforms and transforms it, a system of divine deeds and graces, of man's aberration, sin and reformation. Therefore the history of revelation stands in intimate relation with the doctrine of revelation, and, were I to regulate the religious instruction of children in its first stages, I should with the exception of instruction in the most important truths which every Christian must know, lay all stress on a simple and edifying historical narration. Heart, mind and memory are equally exercised by such a representation of the kingdom of God in its historical progress, and results for life are thereby attained.

Text-books on catechetics abound in the discussion of the division, explanation and exemplification of ideas, in a word, of the *popularity* of catechetical instruction. In my "Aphorismen"¹ I noted the most necessary points of this subject; as a rule, what is said about the sermon, may likewise be applied to catechetics. Explain what needs explanation in order that the instruction attain its end, which is, the correct understanding of the doctrines of faith; but do not insist on

¹ p. 377 sq.

such a thorough presentation as you would expect of a scientific definition, for the child is not yet capable of it, nor is it necessary. The mind of the child dwells more on pictures than on ideas; a good significant picture will therefore say more to it than a half-understood idea. Revelation thus instructed the Israelites; at first it represented God and His kingdom in pictures and anthropomorphisms, and thus, under the guise of the sensible it led them on to the spiritual. And therefore it will be necessary that the catechist should know two languages, — the language of the school and of science, and that of life and of the people, — and that he be able to translate the former correctly, plainly and intelligibly into the latter. He should therefore have a thorough knowledge of theology, as well as of the people and of the vernacular. If he be deficient in theological knowledge, he will despite himself teach many erroneous, false and even heretical doctrines; if he be deficient in knowledge of the people and of the vernacular, his instruction will be an intellectual torture, and, moreover, fruitless.

I remarked before, that a child clings to the sensible, that it is easily moved by sensible impressions, that it unites in its fancy the *teacher* and the doctrine he teaches. For this reason the catechist should avoid every-

thing shocking, distracting, peculiar and repulsive, that would tend to make him an object of ridicule. His gait and posture, his attitude and gestures, his countenance and language, even his dress, ought to be worthy of the man and priest and his sacred calling.

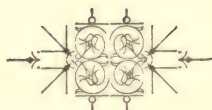
Now, my dear Timothy, what shall I say in conclusion, to inspire you with zeal for your catechetical calling? One word is sufficient. You love God, and therefore you love the children and work for them; God also was a child.

How mysterious is a child!
 God Himself a child has been;
 And because we are God's children,
 Came a child, to save from sin.
 How mysterious is a child!
 All who felt this once delighted
 Are with children through the Child
 Divine united.

Full of honor is a child.
 Said the Word of God Eternal:
 They that are not like the children
 Cannot enter joy supernal.
 Full of honor is a child.
 All who felt this once delighted
 Are with children through the Child Divine
 united.

O, how sacred is a child!
 Spake the Lord in Bible story:

All the angels of these children
Gaze upon the Father's glory.
O, how sacred is a child!
All who felt this once delighted
Are with children through the Child
Divine united.¹



¹ Clement Brentano.

LETTER XXVI.

Homiletics.

Plato, who, as St. Augustine¹ remarks, surmised so many things, which found their fulfilment in Christianity, calls oratory a leading of the soul by words.² What a splendid saying! This explains, if not fully, the mission of the pastor. For the pastor has a twofold office to fill; he should direct his words first of all to God in order to implore from Him grace and every blessing, and then to man in order to lead him to the kingdom of God. Thus the sermon is God's deed and man's word; God showers down upon the preacher His light and grace, which, as a luminous and warming fire, encompasses him and likewise touches the hearer and places him in the current of what is holy; He bestows on the preacher that indescribable knowledge of the charity of Christ, the foundation of which in the hearts of men is laid by faith, by which they are born again in Jesus Christ.³

Inasmuch as the word was directed to those who were outside, it became a glad tidings, a

¹ De vera relig. c. 3.

² Phaedr. (3, 261).

³ Ephes. 3, 19; 1. Cor. 4, 15.

tiding of salvation, a gospel, a *kerigma*; ¹ in as far as it instructed those who accepted it and came within the Church, it became *catechetics*; in as far as it introduced the faithful into the mysteries of faith and into a Christian life, it became a *homily*.

You understand therefore, my young friend, how intimately catechism and the sermon, catechetics and homiletics, are connected, how the pastor should consider them as of equal importance. In theory we may separate them, in life they will mutually penetrate and supplement each other. Was not the powerful sermon of the apostle of the Gentiles at the Areopagus a catechetical instruction, the model and sum-total of all Christian catechetics, in which he depicted as with words of fire on the dark night of paganism, the history of sin and of redemption? ² And the first sermon of St. Peter, after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the apostles, when he came forth before the assembled multitude and said: "This Jesus, Whom you have crucified, God has made Him our Lord and Saviour" ³ — this was the first catechetical instruction ever held. "Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of

¹ 1 Cor. 1, 23: in the Greek.

² Acts 17, 22-31.

³ Acts 2, 2-36.

your sins''¹ — these words, pronounced for the first time before the assembled people on the day of Pentecost, have never been forgotten. They have converted the whole world to the cross, they have created a new world. These words have gone forth unto the ends of the earth, and still reëcho in the aisles of our cathedrals and within the walls of the village church, and they will only cease to resound upon the dying lips of the last priest, when this world shall have arrived at the end of its course and the day of eternity shall have dawned. These words have civilized Europe and continually exercise great influence over men's minds.

What catechetics has planted, the sermon should foster and further develop. The sermon should, therefore, never be separated from catechetics, as little as a tree from its roots; it will always cling to catechetics, and, at the present day, especially, it should not forget, that in our parishes there are to be found catechumens of every age, who greatly need instruction in the rudiments of faith.²

Yes, my young friend, even in the order of nature the power of speech is the greatest, the most beautiful power that man can exert over man. Powerful is the enjoyment that

¹ Acts, 2, 38.

² Hebrews 5, 12.

attracts, powerful the gold that glitters, powerful the sword that terrifies, but the word is the most powerful; for as high as the mind stands above matter, so high above all other powers is the power of the word. For this reason Greece and Rome were so great, therefore have all cultured nations always striven for the prize in eloquence; eloquence assuredly is the crown of all intellectual life, the most beautiful of arts, that piece of art in the creation of which all the higher faculties of man participate. In it is visible the clearness and solidity of the thinker, the warmth and depth of persuasion, the enthusiasm of the poet, in it are poured forth all the emotions of great, fervent souls, burning with love for God, for country and for man. In speech the innermost life of man pulsates, in it there lies an energy which with irresistible might captivates the audience.

And therefore, my dear Timothy, the Church esteems oratory so highly. She chose pure gold and silver and the glittering diamond to encompass the Most Holy, she descended into the depths of the ocean to get precious pearls to decorate her sanctuaries, the bee must prepare for her pure wax, to be consumed on her altars; with the choicest linens and costliest vestments, like unto kings, she vests her priests when about to

enter the sanctuary. Thus all creatures are made to enter into the service of God, thus all the works of God are made to praise their Maker. That which is highest, best, and noblest of all that God has made, the human intellect and its manifestation — speech, *should be made, in the highest manner to announce God's praise and glory.* And this is done by the words of the *sermon*.

Your words however are not human, but *divine words*. For it is God Who said to His Church: "Going, teach all nations and baptize them" "I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."¹ As it is God, Who, according to the saying of St. Augustine, baptizes all, consecrates all, blesses all through the visible ministry of the priest, so it is also God, Who preaches through the preacher. And therefore the Church and the faithful call the sermon "the word of God."² The preaching of God's word is the first, the most necessary and indispensable office of the Church and the noblest duty of the bishop.³ And therefore also the freedom of announcing it is her inalienable, divine right, with which she may never part. Let goods and possessions, honors and favors be

¹ Matth. 28, 19 sq.

² 2. Cor. 5, 19; cf. Conc. Trid. Sess XXIII., De reform. c. 1.

³ Conc. Trid. Sess. V., De reform. c. 2.

taken from her, let the hand of persecution lay heavily upon her, everything will she and must she sacrifice, but not the liberty to announce the word of God. As Sts. Peter and John spoke, when ordered by the Sanhedrim to be silent, so did the Church speak during the most bloody persecutions; so she declared when threatened by the praetors, when before the throne of the Cæsars, so she spoke in the past and will speak for all future ages: *Non possumus.*¹

It is not a human, but a divine word that we announce; proximately, as St. Augustine observes, the words of the sermon strike but the ear of the hearer, but God's grace, touching the heart, is attached to this audible word;² for He is with us. And therefore, my young friend, we trust on the power of our word in quite a different manner from that of the profane orator; it is Christ Himself, the Word of the Father, that speaks through us, that through our word takes shape and form in the souls of men, that, in a certain sense, becomes again incarnate through the sermon. He withdrew His visible humanity from us, but He left us His word, which may be called His mystical body, in which He continues to live among

¹ Acts 4, 20.

² De grat. christ. I., 24.

us, to teach us, to announce to us His mysteries, to raise souls from the dead.¹ But this is not all; it is not the will of man which presumes to announce the words of the sermon; it is God Himself, Who has sent us and has promised us His Spirit. It is His word the preacher announces, be he educated or not; he is supported by the highest authority, by the authority of God Himself, Who sent him; and therefore the preacher confides in Him, Who will place His words on his lips and Who strengthens the weak.

The sermon is then, a great sacramental. How shall they believe Him, of Whom they have not heard; how shall they preach, unless they be sent? ²

Thus the sermon is the condition and the road leading to faith. And what happened to Lydia, when the Lord opened her heart whilst she was listening to the sermon of St. Paul, is a rule for the operation of the Holy Ghost in the Church for all ages. Faith and with it grace and salvation come by hearing. How then shall they call on Him, in Whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him, of Whom they have not heard? And therefore let no one say: I have preached

¹ Tertul., *De resurr. carn.* c. 37: *Itaque sermonem constituens vivificatorem eundem etiam carnem suam dixit.* cf. Ephes. 5, 25-27.

² Rom. 10, 14.

in vain. As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return no more thither, but soak into the earth and water it and cause it to become green with vegetable life so will my word be, which goeth forth from my lips; it will not return to me void, but it will do whatsoever I please, and will prosper in the things for which I sent it.¹

Such then, my dear Timothy, is the power of the word of God. It brings forth fruit, for the hand of God is not shortened; it always bears fruit, if not to-day or perhaps to-morrow, it will bear fruit in *due season*, in *God's season*.² Who art thou, man, that wouldst think to look into the invisible depths of the heart and to be able to say: there the seed of the word of God has not fallen; that wouldst say, everything is dead and blighted in that heart, life cannot be created anew in it? And even if it were true, even if not a good thought, not a pious sigh, nor a resolution of amendment had been engendered by the sermon, will not at least the memory of it remain? Will not the seed, lying dead for so many years in the sinner's memory, again revive, and begin to germinate on the death-bed? "Have you not seen,"

¹ Isaias 55, 10 sq.

² Ps. 1, 3.

says St. Chrysostom,¹ “how parents do not leave their children, even if the doctors have given up all hope, how with tears in their eyes they assist them even to their last breath? So do you also to your brethren! These parents cannot by their tears and lamentations keep death at a distance, but you can do so by patience.” However, were all your apprehensions correct, had all your words fallen on hard, stony and sterile ground, yet what you did was something really great, for you fulfilled the mission of Christ, Who came into this world, *to give testimony unto the truth.*² Truly, it was something grand and noble. We admire the vassal, who remains faithful to his sovereign and lord, when all the others have rebelled and denied further allegiance to him, who goes with him into exile and never forsakes him, — are we not likewise soldiers of Christ, have we not sworn allegiance to Him *usque ad extremum vite halitum*, is it not something great and honorable to raise our voice in His honor, so that error may be exposed, that the rights of God may yet find a dwelling in the hearts of men, that truth may not disappear from the face of the earth? Perhaps you are irritated because so few people come to listen to your sermon. We human beings like so often to

¹ In Lazar. hom. I., 4.

² John 18, 37.

measure our activity by the deceitful rule of man; let us however view it with the eyes of God, from the point of view of eternity. I cannot sufficiently insist on this thought; for discouragement and weariness, which necessarily lead to lukewarmness and negligence in the exercise of the office of preacher, are not a rare phenomenon, and are the more apparent, the greater our zeal in the beginning. Recent years have proved to us what would become of the Catholic people, if it were possible to abolish preaching. When during the "Kulturkampf" in Germany so many churches were left vacant, so many priests were exiled, the people in vain looked for someone to minister the bread of the *word* of God to them — the time was not long, and yet how rapidly and alarmingly the moral and religious life declined, so that even those who had brought on this condition of affairs, were frightened at its evil results. When such a temptation approaches you, I should like to call to your mind the words of St. Francis Borgia: "Consider that Christ, although fatigued from the long journey, deigned to preach to a few disciples only, nay, even to one woman at Jacob's well."

"Give me ten saintly preachers," said a great and holy man, "and I will lift the

world off its hinges.” In some dioceses there are not ten, not a hundred, but thousands of pulpits, thousands of rostra to use a phrase of the world; who can measure the power which the Church exercises through them!

Lately a saying, said to have originated in a well-deserving bishop, has become very popular: “Were St. Paul to return on earth, he would not preach, he would edit a newspaper.” Do not believe this, my dear Timothy; the supposed author of this saying did not, nor could he have said these words, however highly he may esteem the importance and power of the press. He knew well that Christ sent His apostles unto the ends of the earth to preach, and that the Scriptures proximately owe their existence to outward circumstances, although they were written, not without divine sanction; he knew well, that according to the Lord’s will and command the word of mouth is to be the ordinary way of the promulgation of the gospel; he knew also, that there have been many, as St. Irenaeus¹ remarks, who, “without ink and paper” have preserved the traditions of the Catholic faith in their hearts; he knew likewise that the Lord has promised His assistance and blessing only to the preaching of the word. And

¹ Adv. haeres. III., 4, 2.

in fact, the salvation of the Church, and the essence of all pastoral activity never did, nor does it now lie in book-wisdom. Books, even the very best, can exercise our intellectual faculties, they can instruct, but results they cannot produce. Results are deeds, and these can proceed only from a person, and then, not from his intellect alone. He, who wishes to arouse life, must himself live — for life can be inflamed only by life, — he must have assumed Christ into his mind and heart, into his intelligence and will, into the innermost depth of his soul; thus only, filled by Him and fecundated by His Spirit, thus only can the preacher “beget sons in Christ Jesus by the gospel.”¹ Tauler makes use of the expression — “*to do a sermon*”, which is logically correct. The parish is built on the priest, the diocese on the bishop, the universal Church on the Pope, not on “ink and paper.” In the words of the priest that sacred fire, brought down upon the earth, speaks; his eyes shine at the thought of the grandeur of his office; his countenance becomes radiant, because the love of God and of man dwells within him; he stretches out his arms as a token of that holy longing, with which the apostle of the Gentiles wished to embrace the whole world, in order to press it closely to the heart of God.²

¹ 1 Cor. 4, 15. ² 1 Thess. 2, 7-12,

Therefore the faithful hardly heed the best teachings of a pastoral letter, as long as it remains but a written document, and is only read to them; when however the priest explains it, interprets it and makes the application, then only does the congregation listen attentively. "The written (and printed) word," says St. Jerome, "is in a certain sense apparently dead; it must be awakened to life by its author. The mysterious power of the spoken word consists in this, that intellects meet, and reciprocally give and take." And therefore we all, following a certain natural instinct, are not satisfied with merely hearing a good preacher, we wish also to see him, whilst he is speaking; the sight of his person doubles the effect of his words. And, finally do we not pray before we open our mouths to announce the word of God; does not the whole congregation offer a prayer with us, before listening to the word of God; and are we not certain of its acceptance, since it is said in the name of Jesus? A dead letter cannot express the love, the feeling, the heartfelt compassion for souls, which open to us the hearts of our hearers, which console the parish, as a mother consoles her child. And again: books can instruct, but they cannot do what a sermon does — *edify*¹ they cannot build up the king-

¹ 1 Cor. 14, 12.

dom of God in human souls by the teachings of faith, by the exercise of love.¹ Thus, as I remarked previously, the work of the catechism is continued by the sermon, which builds up the edifice of the temple of God on the foundation laid by the former. And for this reason, because the word of God, as announced in the sermon, speaks to the whole man in all conditions of his life, it is not instruction alone, "illumination of the mind" alone, as rationalism in its day assumed, nor the influencing of the will alone, as Methodism would have it, nor the testimony of our own experience alone, as Pietism claims. All these elements must be visible in the sermon, although at times one of them will predominate, and at other times another, to suit different audiences, times and circumstances. When the sermon recalls, preserves and further develops, what has been begun in catechetics, it is an *instruction*; when it arouses, stirs up, exhorts, encourages the fallen, the lukewarm, the slothful, the "sleeping"² and brings them back to their "first charity,"³ it becomes a sermon of *conversion*; when, finally, it gives expression to the new life, which has been awakened, it becomes a *testimony*. We may denote the 'placere' of

¹ Ephes. 4, 11-15.

² Ephes. 5, 14.

³ Apoc. 2, 4.

which St. Augustine¹ speaks, as the effect, but not the cause of the sermon. Would not many a one, hearing a truly Christian sermon, delivered seriously and with unction, be able to say with the disciples at Emmaus: "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way?"² Assuredly it is Christ's word, which is spoken in the sermon, it is He Himself, Who has taken shape and form in the truly spiritual preacher and become visible in his words; with the overwhelming power of a heart inflamed with love, he addresses himself to the hearts of his congregation.

Thus is fulfilled in the sermon the saying of the apostle: "And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ, that henceforth we be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. But doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him, Who is the head, even Christ."³

¹ De doctr. chr. IV., 28, n. 61.

² Luke 24, 32.

³ Ephes. 4, 11-15.

The idea of a sermon is that it should *instruct*; "teach all nations" is the command of the Saviour. And these words are obligatory now as they were with the apostles, and so they will remain for our successors, as long as the word of the cross is announced; so far rationalism was correct in stating that instruction is the aim of the preacher; but it was mistaken when it repudiated every direct action of the preacher on the will of the hearer, when it denied it as a right of the preacher to excite to self-reflection, to reformation, to conversion. True, the sermon is directed to the Christian congregation; but, since it is inserted in the *Missa catechumenorum*, it is a proof, that the teaching element is not put in the background. Who would wish to assert that those present in the church need no instruction? Are there not also among them some that are weak in faith, half-believing, doubting and hesitating? It cannot however be denied, that a sermon, delivered from the depth of a heart borne aloft by the spirit, and blessed with the firm conviction of the preacher, although it contains not a word against infidels and infidelity, or that would directly tend to confirm one in the faith, does not seldom, by the captivating power of the divine truth, awaken admiration, love and desire for faith in some hearer, from

whose soul then the silent prayer ascends: "Lord, I wish to believe; help Thou my unbelief!" But this is not the rule. We preachers are debtors unto all; all have a right, both the weak and the strong in faith, to ask that we promote their spiritual welfare. In the Missa catechumenorum, based on, and in connection with the gospel just read, the preacher fulfils the commission of the Saviour; all Scripture is profitable to teach.¹ The symbolism used at the reading of the gospel, the candles, the signing of the fore-head, mouth, lips, indicate the primary aim of the sermon, namely, that it be light to our mind, and that it live in our heart.

The sermon is not instruction *alone*. All Scripture is indeed profitable to teach, to reprove, but also "to correct, to instruct in justice."² The bishop must be able to exhort in sound doctrine, and to convince the gainsayers.³ The cry of the prophet: Convertimini unusquisque!⁴ the admonition of the apostle: Poenitentiam agite!⁵ should always recur, even in a sermon addressed to a practically pious congregation; and even if the sermon be not a mission-sermon, a penitential-

¹ 2 Tim. 3, 16.

² 2 Tim. 1. c.

³ Titus 1, 9.

⁴ Jer. 35, 15.

⁵ Acts 2, 38.

sermon, yet the spirit of penance should never leave the heart of the Christian; all the great saints were *great penitents*. In so far there is some truth in Methodism; it has the consciousness of guilt and strives to be delivered from it; had it only gone the way marked out by the gospel and trodden by the Catholic Church! Only from the depth of our consciousness of sin do we rise up to the height of love of God; through the mist of the tears of penance do we see plainly and recognize the mysteries. By this however, my young friend, I do not require nor approve of much exhorting, censuring and scolding in the sermon. A strong will can be overcome only by one that is stronger. The weakest of our sensual inclinations is stronger than all arguing. Man is reformed only when a higher and nobler *love* takes possession of his inclinations and displaces those that are base and ignoble. There cannot be found a stronger sermon of penance than the venerable form of Jesus Christ in His humility and debasement, in His charity and kindness toward men, in His being reviled and not reviling in return, in His going after sinners with untiring longanimity, in His not despising the chalice of suffering, in His obedience unto death, yea, unto the death of the cross. Every sermon represents Him to our eyes, and we cannot then look at ourselves without exclaiming: "Lord, I am

not worthy!" Least of all should I place the whole aim of the sermon in the "revelation of sanctified, Christian personality."¹ This Schleiermacher and his school did; since he regarded worship, in contrast with actual acts, only as a mere representation, so also he regarded the sermon, as a part of worship, merely as a representation of the Christian consciousness of the congregation. This view cannot find any support in Scripture; it suffices to glance at the epistles of St. Paul to be convinced, that his sermons to his churches, in which there were "many infirm and many sleeping"² were not merely a representation of Christian consciousness. This view presupposes an ideal state of the spiritual life of a congregation, which is nowhere to be found; in fact, St. Bernard himself again and again exhorted his monks to penance. From another side this view conflicts with the actual state of things; for where is the parish that really views in the preacher a "sanctified personality?" I have never denied that the personality of the preacher, his life of faith and inner life, are of importance in the exercise of his ministry, but this is eclipsed by the objective character of his office; he does not preach himself, but Christ preaches through him, God as it were exhorting by him.³

¹ C. Palmer, *Evang. Homil.* p. 12 sq

² 1 Cor. 11, 30.

³ 2 Cor. 5, 20.

As long as we Catholics live upon this earth, we shall have to combat the world, the flesh and the devil, and since it is not given to us, without a special grace, to remain free from all venial faults, we shall always, as the Lord exhorted, have to pray for the forgiveness of our sins; the cry: "Do penance" will never be allowed to cease in our pulpits.

Consequently it is God, Who, as the highest cause in the realm of nature and of grace, creates, works, preserves and directs everything; but it is not He alone; He wished to make use of instrumental causes, and herein He shows His love of creatures, in giving them not only existence, but also the possibility to act as He acts, in urging them to be active, and in acting Himself in them,¹ in making use of them in all spheres of existence, as mediate causes. This same law is also visible in the office of preaching. *Ut cooperatores simus veritatis*,² this is the office of the preacher, to instruct and convert, although not in the same manner as done by God, but nevertheless as a mediate and instrumental cause, working under the influence of God, the first cause.³ The Lord, wishing to spread His doctrine over the whole earth and to preserve it unadulterated unto the end, called His dis-

¹ Thomas, *De potentia* q. 3 a. 7.

² 3 John 1, 8.

³ Thom. 1. c.

ciples and gave them His Spirit, and the mission, "to be witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth."¹ This was the beginning, the archetype, the fundamental principle of the Catholic sermon. Thus He elevated the mind of man armed with His Spirit, and the word of man with the help of His word, to be the organ, messenger and medium of His revelation to man. He has ordained it so, that in the vicissitudes of time, in the multiplicity of the stages of education, in the variety of wants, each one should have what is necessary for his salvation. But the human mind, the human word, is the *most worthy organ* to announce the divine word, for among all things visible created by God, it is the most like to God.² As human nature was elevated in Christ to the dignity of the Son of God, so likewise in the preaching office of the Church there takes place a supernatural elevation of human nature to continue the work of redemption by the word borne and fructified by grace. The Word of the Father was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; in truly human manner He walked among us, and taught as men do; herein the way in which the world

¹ Acts 1, 8.

² Thom. Sum. III., q. 4, a. 1.

is to be led back to God, to be redeemed and pardoned, has been shown us. As the Church is the divine-human institution, in which His Spirit continues to reign, His grace to work, and we therefore ascend from the material to the spiritual, from the natural to the supernatural, so must we human beings become His tools, in whose words His word continues to live, in whose sermons man receives His doctrines, so that, whosoever hears them, hears Him.¹ Since then the Lord wished to make use of human instruments, man must prepare himself to become a worthy one for the annunciation of this truth. True, grace, most of all and above all, has to prepare him; it is the objective, the divine in the sermon, and can therefore be powerful also in the weak. Nevertheless it is man, who should advance toward grace, who with its help should prepare himself. And this is the subjective, the human element. When God wishes to speak through man, He wishes to speak through the whole, thinking, believing, longing man, through man, with all the perfections of his body, with all the talents of his mind; and therefore man should speak this word with all the gifts of his mind, with all the warmth of his sentiments, with all the love of his heart, so that it may wholly, fully, unabridged with its convincing truth, be made

¹ Luke 10, 16.

known to man. He cannot do this without cultivating his mind, his heart, his speech, that is, making them capable, of placing it before men, as a pure crystal in all its splendor, without obscuring, tarnishing or disfiguring it. Hence the preacher has need of education, of the school. The *school* educates us in humanities, and their noblest blossom is the art of speech. And this the preacher devotes to the *service of God*.

I must in this place again repeat the complaint I made on the first pages of my 'Aphorismen': We have no schools of oratory, as the greatness of the object, the need of the Catholic people, and the struggles of the present time require. It cannot be denied, that some preachers are able to attract crowds around their pulpits. This is always very encouraging, for it tends to prove that the people yet hunger for the word of God, and testifies also to the zeal of these preachers. There should be in every seminary a class of oratory, a thorough, uninterrupted instruction therein, which does not consist in obsolete theories, in an enumeration of old rules and of gestures, an instruction that is spiritless, tedious and poor in thoughts. Only he can teach eloquence, who has practised it for his whole life, who does not restrain, nor suppress natural talent, but who allows it to go on its natural

way and to become richly developed, who himself has watched the emotions of the people, who has experienced their good-fortunes and their woes and especially in his own self, to whom faith is a light in all the paths of science and in all the questions of life. Only he can be a good teacher, who has eternity always in view, a thing which will prevent his regarding figures of speech and high-sounding words as eloquence, who rather accustoms his scholars thoroughly to consider things in their relation to the soul and the soul's beatitude, to penetrate everything with the spirit of Christ, to judge, from this aspect, the manifold fulness of life, to give a place in his sermon to everything that is true and good and worthy of man. The phrase 'orator fit' is only half true, for eloquence also requires talents, gifts of mind and body, which instruction and the school cannot give, when nature has refused them; instruction and schooling can awaken, develop and cultivate these natural gifts. And certainly our youth, destined for the priesthood, are not devoid of these gifts; but these gifts must be fostered, taken care of, and — last, but not least — be *encouraged*.

I have, at the beginning of this letter, adverted to the law of the Church, which makes it a duty for each priest, having the care of

530 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

souls, to preach, and St. Thomas¹ calls it the *most important duty* of the pastor. It is the duty of our lives; as long as we have the care of souls, so long also shall we remain preachers. This surely ought to exhort us to be as persevering, as conscientious, as careful as possible in our education for the pulpit; there is question here of our whole life, of the most important part of our ministry. Let us not appeal to our talents, our gifts; the best talent, nay even genius itself, stands in need of method, of discipline, of schooling, of practice, if we do not wish to degenerate, and genius is in the greatest danger of doing so. Only by schooling and practice is talent educated and cultivated; what was at first the result of meditation, of observation on one's self and others, will, by constant practice become a second nature to us, as taste and, in fact, every artistic faculty becomes so in a master — it becomes one with him. It is as natural to him to create something beautiful as it is for a moral man to act morally.

In these letters, my dear Timothy, I have discussed with you many sciences and studies. All these, the philosophical and the theological, the former indirectly, the latter directly, come within the sphere of a priest's education. Our whole education however, class-

¹ Sum. III., q. 67, a. 1, ad 1.

ical as well as seminary education, should be made helps to the sermon. The sermon is the ripest fruit of our whole education, as men, as Christians, as priests. Is it possible, that that, which is to be the crown, the perfection of our whole education from youth up, should be neglected? The question of education is agitated in many writings, in frequent meetings, before a great concourse of people; the question of education in the common village-school up to that in the universities is discussed. Is it possible, that that, which is of the greatest importance, the instruction in that which is the highest we have, which is of the greatest moment to all of us, which is given to us from a holy rostrum, in the name of the most high God, the most ancient, the most universal, the most necessary instruction, through the sermon, should be neglected?



LETTER XXVII.

Liturgy.

One of the most important offices of the priest, is the celebration of the *liturgy*; to it especially are applicable the words of the bishop at the ordination of priests: "It is the office of the priest to sacrifice, to bless, to govern, to preach and to baptize." The priest is eminently a liturgist; he may, when old and feeble, cease to catechize and preach, he may cease to administer the sacraments, but as long as he offers up the Holy Sacrifice, he stands in the center of all priestly activity, whence the grace of all the sacraments, the power of all blessings proceed, whence, as streams from a common source, they spring forth and flow over the garden of God, His holy Church. This is therefore also the great consolation, my young friend, which our calling affords us. Generals sheathe their sword, when old age comes upon them; statesmen retire to private life, but yet feel painfully the meaning of the words: *Difficile est in otio quies*, — to the priest alone is granted, in the common course of things, to continue unto his end that,

which was to him the highest and holiest in his vocation, to offer up the Holy Sacrifice. Liturgy is, then, in its practice, the most important office in the care of souls, and, as a science, the most excellent part of pastoral theology.

You may object and say: if such is the case, why do you treat of liturgy in the last place, at the end of the various other theological studies? Ought it not to have been treated of at the beginning, or at least along with pastoral theology?

Viewed from a certain point, your opinion is correct. It is the Church, that takes us into her arms by her liturgy, when we have hardly entered into life; baptism opens the doors that we may enter the communion of the kingdom of God, it makes us Christians. We are permanently incorporated in Christ Himself; He lives in us by His Spirit. We have received the theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, as also the other supernatural virtues. The root has been planted in the soul, from which grows the tree of grace of Christian life, with all its heavenly blossoms and fruits. All this is placed in germ and potentially in the soul by the *grace of baptism*; with the development of our reason it has to become active, the habit is to be turned into act, the treaty we have signed with God in

baptism, is to be always more and more confirmed. It is then that the Church sends us the *catechist*, in order to build up in us, on the foundation laid by the sacrament, Christian faith and Christian life; baptism refers to catechetics, which fulfils the condition under which alone baptism is allowable, namely, instruction and education in the Christian religion. This progress in Christianity must always become more complete, stronger, like a supernatural sprig it must descend into the depths of our nature, and permeate it, and elevate it into the sphere of the supernatural. We are Christians, but we must become *more Christian*. Then the Church sends us *preachers*, who have to build up on the foundation laid in catechetics. The preacher's word is God's word; he declares unto us the counsels of God concerning us without keeping anything back.¹ To feed and strengthen us, to enable us to recover grace, the Church administers to us the *sacraments*; her liturgy meets us at the turning-points of our life, it accompanies us as an angel sent by God, and deposits on every step, which our nature takes upward, the blessing and grace of the Holy Ghost; it accompanies us to the portals of eternity, and when we have crossed its threshold, it follows us with the prayer, more significant than

¹ Acts 20, 27.

any parting words: *Requiem aeternam dona ei, Domine; et lux perpetua luceat ei!* Liturgy forms the center of Christian life and of the Church of God on earth, in the *Holy Sacrifice*. The child kneels at the foot of the altar and folds its tiny hands to the Lamb, Which was there slain from the beginning of the world; there the man bends his knee before the great God, Who for his sake came into this world, suffered for him and died for him; and the dim eye of the old man is transfigured when he beholds Him, Who is raised aloft by the priest; for, "as often as this sacrifice is celebrated, so often is the work of our redemption renewed."¹

Thus liturgy stands as a heavenly, peace-promising rainbow over our life, over mankind, and the splendor of supernatural life and of all grace, which descends like dew from thence, is represented, as in seven rays, in the seven sacraments, which all proceed from that one fount of light and grace, — the altar.

And therefore liturgy is the first of all priestly functions, but only *ontologically* and in the order of existence; catechetics and the sermon preceed it in the *logical* order. The sermon should lead us to an understanding of the liturgy. Then its significance will become the greater for us, the more we

¹ *Seer. Dom.* IX. post Pent.

know of its origin, which goes back to the most distant times, some of its customs and forms come down to us from the days of creation, and we shall then understand the deep meaning of these so simple and majestic words, as also the signification of the symbols, which, without words, say as much as and even more than words. And then, studying the liturgy of the Church and pondering over it, you will have the same experience as a person going for the first time into a venerable old cathedral. It has happened to many, nay to whole generations and to otherwise highly educated men, as Fenelon, what Goethe says of himself in his younger days, that he could not understand the grand edifice erected by Erwin von Steinbach (the cathedral at Strassburg), that he even turned away from it in disgust. Better times have brought on a better understanding and the highest admiration of its artistic beauty. Such has also been the case with our liturgy. Here you behold a world of ideas in visible, tangible form, the plastic expression of the highest and the most noble, of the loveliest and the most childlike, a grand symbol of the heavenly and divine, a poem, through which breathes the spirit of God, an allegory of the threefold condition of man, in sin, in penance and grace, and in glory, the eternal history of

our race. Here also the words hold good: "You are like the spirit which you comprehend." If our old cathedrals have undergone this fate, how can we be surprised to see our liturgy, which created and formed them, misunderstood and even despised?

I should now like to call your attention to what causes our liturgy to appear to us of such great importance. Liturgy is the expression, the representation, the reflection of our *faith*. St. Augustine already took his arguments from liturgy to combat Pelagianism;¹ for, *lex supplicandi legem statuit credendi*. There is hardly a liturgical function in the Church, which does not of itself announce a dogmatic truth. As often as we recite the doxology with the addition: *Sicut erat in principio, et nunc et semper, et in saecula saeculorum, amen*, we are reminded of by-gone ages and of the struggles of the Church with the Arians. But vice versa also, dogma gives us the key to understand the worship, to understand its deep-meaning prayers, full of unction and sublimity. When dogma was no longer understood and became insipid, liturgy likewise became but a play of forms to the uninitiated, which rationalism endeavored to lay aside, in order

¹ De dono persever. c. 23; Ep. CCXVII, ad Vitalem c. 1.2; cf. Fr. A. Zaccaria, De usu libr. liturg. in rebus theol.

to replace it by a worship "in the spirit of truth." Furthermore, liturgy, like a strong and visible bond, unites the consciousness of unity and continuity of the Church of the present day with that of apostolic times; nay, it is liturgy, which, in opposition to the Gnostic and Manichean sects, appropriated the Old Testament, which, so to say, in its holy seasons — Easter, Pentecost —, in its sacred symbols — oil, light, water —, in its sacred history, acting as a type to the New Law, continues to live in our liturgy; but in a higher and more perfect manner, as the rough outlines in the perfect picture, the type in its fulfilment. The fundamental thought of Christianity, namely, that by baptism and the Blessed Sacrament we have entered into a mystical, but yet real communion of life with Christ, that He continues to live in us, that we have become one body and blood with Him, that we have been implanted in Him unto a similar death and similar life, that He continually dwells alive among us,¹ all this is forcibly brought before our minds by the liturgy. The grains of incense, which as a sweet-smelling odor arise from our altars, the grand monuments of our cathedrals in which we celebrate the holy

¹ John 6, 50 sq.; 15, 10; Col. 2, 12; 3, 3-4; 1 Cor. 6, 19; Rom. 8, 15; Gal. 4, 5; 2 Cor. 1, 22; Ephes. 1, 14; Cyril. of Jerus., Catech. mystagog. IV., 3.

mysteries, the genuflection of the priest at Mass, the folding of hands of so many thousands of faithful, the flickering of the candle in the hut of the poor sick, to whom the priest is administering the viaticum, the festive splendor in our cathedrals, all tell us: God is here. Liturgy points to history; Christmas, Easter, Pentecost are commemorative festivals of the grand deeds of God, which He has wrought for us; and all the graces, bestowed upon His people in the past, are permanently preserved for us in the liturgy.

As our liturgy contains the whole history of the revelation of God, therefore it has harmoniously incorporated into its edifice everything true and approvable that religious thought has ever created. As there is beyond Christianity, its view of God and of the world, no progress, but only a descent, not back to paganism, but below it, since whatever truth the world possessed before the advent of Christ has been assumed and transfigured by Christianity, thus also there is not to be found a liturgy or form of worship in general, which has not been assumed by our liturgy, as the lower is by the higher. Holy places, holy seasons, sacred hymns, holy personages — the religious life of the old world manifested itself in this fourfold number.

540 *Timothy, or Letters to a Young Theologian.*

In her cathedrals the Church has built holy *places* for the celebration of the liturgical functions, she has given us in them a dwelling of God among men; sculpture and painting have decorated them with their works, they have spread over their walls, windows and arches a wealth of colors and statues. And as in the order of nature the earth moves around the sun in measured course, in order that the sun may serve for signs and for seasons, thus does the redeemed world celebrate its holy *seasons* by circling around the sun of all spirits, Jesus Christ. When the sun in its annual course enters the appointed constellations, the earth grows green and brings forth blossoms, flowers and fruit, so also, when the rays of this higher Sun shine forth, the spiritual flowers, the saints, make their appearance, sending forth their buds, which open with the growing day, until at the sixth hour, when they are in the full splendor of their colors, then closing again at night they make room for another divine bud. And thus they form a festive garland of significant symbolism, which redeemed mankind in the course of the year offers up to the Lord of all time. And in the midst of all this *festive tunes resound*; in united tones, in appropriate rhythm, mighty as the rolling waves of a great ocean, they

reëcho majestically and solemnly in the plain chant; in the polyphone melodies of the more serious style, we hear voices that burn as with a divine fire everything worldly, sensual, impure and evil in the human heart, and lift us up into the pure atmosphere, where dwell light, peace, bliss; here we find grandeur and solemnity, sweetness and gentleness, simplicity and nobility; here it appears to us as if the angels were repeating their Christmas-night hymn. And between these melodies our spiritual popular chants and hymns in honor of the Virgin resound, so pious and joyful, so clear and pure as children's rejoicings, from out of the breast of the faithful, reverberating over meadow and valley, over hills and woods. When we read the text of the church-hymns, we cannot help recognizing in their simplicity true nobility, in their every day forms great earnestness, in their unartificial versification a deep, fervent soul-life. In some of them there breathes sublime enthusiasm, holy ecstasy, praise and honor of the almighty God. In others there is a wail of the soul weighed down with misery, death and sin, and the fear of the terrors of the divine justice. Now again, there is the confident utterance of a faithful heart, which, trusting in the divine mercies, clings to His fatherly heart with sentiments of gratitude, of admiration, of

love, for all benefits received. At other times it is a mighty soaring of the soul, encouraging itself to despise the world and expressing a longing to be delivered from this earthly vale of tears. And then the hymns of praise to the Blessed Sacrament! Truly, the "splendid hymn" in praise of the Sacrament of the Altar, as even M. Carrière calls it, places its author, St. Thomas, among our greatest poets, and not without good reason did St. Bonaventure admire him for it.

Sacred *personages*, as we behold them in the cult of all nations, have found their home in our liturgy with the sublimest of all *acts of worship*, — the Sacrifice; for, where there is a sacrifice, there must also be a priest. Nevertheless all these sacrifices and all these priests, more or less consciously, were but mere "shadows and types" of that High-priest, Who alone is pure, and of that Sacrifice, which alone is worthy of God and therefore capable of effecting our perfect pardon.¹ And He it is, Who evermore sacrifices Himself by the priests, His visible representatives, Who offers to the Father a sacrifice in itself clean and acceptable,² and which because He has called the priest in ordination, effects our salvation, although offered by poor and sin-

¹ Basil. hom. in ps. 48, 3; Leo M., In Nativ. Dom. serm. I., 2.

² Mal. 1, 11.

ful men. If in Rome the Flamen Dialis was not allowed to be present where there was fight and bloodshed, if, where he appeared, all business had to cease, who does not realize the greatness and sanctity of the true priest, for whom the pagan longingly desired?

From what I have said, you will learn, that our liturgy is, in fact, the center and apex of all cult as it was ever to be found among Jew and gentile; that it comprises all the elements of truth which they had, discarding what was erroneous and sinful, bringing the imperfect to perfection, that it permeates everything with the spirit of truth and grace, because our cult is elevated by our High-priest Christ, in Whose body all are members, above all earthly and natural things, to a supernatural worship.

And thereby the deepest want of all creatures is satisfied; for man, recognizing his dependence on God, wishes to express outwardly his interior impulse urging him to offer to God veneration, gratitude and love. As religion is a universal fact, so is likewise cult. There cannot exist a religion without worship, even if worship consisted only of lowly, poor, nay, even of sinful forms. This is a psychological necessity, a law of mankind; for whatever touches man in the depth of his soul-life and heart, cannot remain pent up

there; it will, as everything that strongly affects man, make its appearance and become visible in *words* and *actions*, which necessarily react, encouraging, vivifying and strengthening the inner life. The words appear in the different formulas of prayer, which rise from ordinary language to an enthusiastic hymn; the actions appear especially in the symbols and in that most common exercise in all worship,—the *sacrifice*. There is not a nation which does not *pray*,¹ which does not express by *exterior signs* the inner longing of the soul for God. When the priest on Good Friday prostrates himself upon the ground, when he extends his arms, when he beats his breast, when the faithful fold their hands² and bend their knees, we have a symbolism that belongs to all mankind, that everyone understands, and that receives its deepest meaning in our liturgy. Among the pagans the symbol was the immediate, natural expression of the emotion of the soul; in Israel God Himself prescribed it; in Christianity it becomes sacrament and sacramental.³ True!

¹ Thom. Sum. II. II., q. 83, a. 3.

² The folding of the hands, according to J. Grimm, is a symbol of surrendering one-self a prisoner to God.

³ Thom. Contra gent. IV., 56: Quia homo in peccatum lapsus erat, rebus visibilibus indebite inhaerendo, , per ipsa visibilia congruum fuit, quod hominibus remedia salutis adhiberentur.

words remain the primary expression and the most excellent manifestation of religious life; but nevertheless the symbol remains alongside of it and is not suppressed; for it has indeed a mute, but eloquent speech, often more powerful than the word of mouth; for man cannot find words for what moves him deeply; he expresses it symbolically. Nay, silence itself is in a certain sense a symbol.¹ The most ancient, most holy, most universal symbol² is the sacrifice; adoration, thanksgiving, petition and cry for pardon, that are expressed in prayer, find their manifestation in this action. The symbol itself is a picture of what it is intended to represent. And Christian liturgy therefore retains the picture; but it is not a mere picture, for it contains what it signifies. There exists a mutual relation between the inner and the outward life of man. The former reveals itself in the latter, and the latter vivifies and fructifies the former. We learn the importance of outward worship from Sts. Augustine and Thomas. The former says: "He who prays acts externally as one who suppliantly appears before another; he bends his knee, extends his arms, prostrates himself, in order to express his sentiments outwardly. God indeed knows

¹ Missal. Rom. (after Holy Communion): *Quiescit aliquantulum in meditatione sanctissimi sacramenti.*

² cf. Euseb. *Demonstr. evang.* I., 10.

his wishes and his heart, without sensible signs; but man arouses himself thereby to pray more, and this the more fervently and humbly. I know that the motions of the body are not made without previous ones in the heart, and that by the visible motions the inner, the invisible ones are rendered more intense.”¹ St. Thomas says: “It comes natural to us to rise from the sensible to the spiritual; and therefore also we make a visible, external adoration in spirit and in truth, because it proceeds from spiritual devotion and is related to it. In fact we cannot in a sensible manner lift ourselves up to God, but by these sensible signs our mind is urged to soar upwards to God.”²

He therefore, who forbids the sensible expression of devotion, places the soul under restraint and deprives the body of sanctification. For the body also, being God’s and belonging to Him, must in its own way acknowledge Him as its Lord.³ When the soul uplifts itself to God the body kneels down. Thus man offers himself, body and soul, to God; and all nature around him, the macrocosm, is in a certain sense, only the great

¹ De cura gerenda pro mort. c. 5.

² Sum. II. II., q. 84, a. 2; — Ibid. q. 81, a. 7.

³ Thom. 1. c. q. 93, a. 2: Finis divini cultus est, ut homo Deo det gloriam et ei se subiciat mente et corpore. — Ibid. q. 84, a. 2, ad 1.

body of mankind, destined for man. And therefore man draws it — holy places, rivers, rocks, trees and wells — into the sphere of religious worship, he elevates it to a manifestation of his pious sentiments, he bestowes upon it a religious consecration. Thus the natural elements are raised to sacraments, but which first assumed their whole importance and efficacy in Christianity. What was so often in paganism the instrument of sin and a snare for souls, a medium for demoniac powers and a support of polytheistic delusion, Christianity by its liturgy has raised to an instrument of blessings, has made of it stepping-stones, upon which man ascends to God,¹ since under an earthly garment it produces heavenly powers.

Man, however, does not live and is not active merely as an individual; he lives and develops himself in all directions of his existence only in society; his religious life therefore is developed only in religious society, and is naturally both communicative and receptive. From this condition springs *communion of worship*. “Communion of worship appears to us to belong so essentially to religion, that we cannot recognize in it a merely arbitrary institution of men, who have simply united in order to perform religious functions, or to live according to their

¹ Thom. Sum. II. II., q. 84, a. 2.

convictions. As far as our sight reaches back into the past, we are compelled to acknowledge that individual piety originated on the ground of religious communion."¹ Thus cult becomes a common, *public* worship, where the religious people as a body declare their dependence on God. And here also Christianity has established a higher communion, than that, which existed in ancient times on the basis of the family, tribe or national religion; it has collected its own from among all nations, and by the sacred tie of worship it has elevated them to a higher communion,² which has its center, to which all tend and from which all blessings flow, in the eucharistic celebration. In this, Christ, the eternal High-priest, offering Himself to the Father, collects about Himself, as the Head of His Church, all the members, and they possess in Him a sacrifice, higher than all the sacrifices of the pagans, higher than the typical sacrifice of Melchisedech, higher than those of the Old Law.

Thus my dear Timothy, the parish builds

¹ Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Lehrbuch der Religionsgeschichte*, I., p. 132, (Freiburg 1887).

² *Contra Faust.* XIX., 11: In nullum nomen religionis seu verum, seu falsum, coagulari homines possunt, nisi aliquo signaculorum vel sacramentorum visibilium consortio colligantur, quorum sacramentorum vis inenarrabiliter valet plurimum et ideo contempta sacrilegos facit. Impie quippe contemnitur sine quo non potest perfici pietas.

itself up by the All-holy Sacrifice, which is celebrated in its midst; thus does the great Catholic Church rear herself evermore; this is the magical wand preserving her from destruction; for He, Who has given Himself for us in the Holy Sacrifice, Who has transubstantiated by His Spirit the bread and wine into His body and blood, He remains with her, He operates by the Spirit of truth, He instructs her in all truth and raises the son of dust and sin to be the bearer of infallible truth.

To this sacrifice of the eternal High-priest is joined the spiritual sacrifice of the congregation, acceptable to God, through Jesus Christ, for they all are a holy priesthood.¹ The sacrifice of the Mass unites all around the altar, through this sacrifice redeemed mankind is empowered to offer up to God a worthy offering; here is the focus where its faith, hope and charity are ignited; this is the pulse of the great body of the Church, which diffuses warmth and love into the very extremities of the body. Were it possible to deprive her of the sacrifice of the Mass, she would perish, and her dead members would have to be scattered, as we see it to be the case in Protestantism. And therefore the Church insists so much on the attend-

¹ 1 Peter 2, 5.

ance at Mass, for as it was in the time of the apostles,¹ so now the altar with its Sacrifice is the deepest foundation, the unifying bond of unity in the Church. As St. Ignatius wrote to the Magnesians, so even to the present day the Church says to us: "Come together as in *one* temple of God, as unto *one* altar, as to *one* Jesus Christ"! ² And he stigmatizes as heresy the remaining away from the altar; those guilty of this, separate themselves wilfully from the communion of the faithful,³ as the Church separated from her body as unworthy members those who had committed grievous crimes.

The Holy Sacrifice of the Head then, becomes the form and the model of the mystical offering of its members. "Thus it happens," says St. Augustine,⁴ "that the whole redeemed city, the congregation and communion of saints, is offered as a common sacrifice by the High-priest, Who, in His passion sacrificed Himself for His people, so that we may be *one* body under this high Head in the form of a servant. For He offered it and was offered in it, since He became a mediator in said form, in these priests, in these sacrifices." Therefore the apostle⁵ beseeches us

¹ Acts 2, 42; 20, 7.

² Ad Magnes. 7, 2.

³ Ad Smyrn. c. 7.

⁴ De civit. Dei, X., 6.

⁵ Rom. 12, 1.

to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, our reasonable service. This is the offering of Christians: many are *one body* in Christ. And this happens in the eucharistic celebration on the altar, where they learn to sacrifice themselves in Him, Whom they sacrifice. Here then the sacrificial thought becomes the foundation and essence of all Christian life, here the faithful are introduced into the communion of the passion and death of the Lord, that in mystical death they be buried with Him, being dead to the world, so that they may live only in Him. In the sacrificial fire on the altar the sacrificial fire in the hearts of the congregation is ignited; with the Victim Christ they sacrifice themselves. Protestantism wished to retain the sacrifice in the prayers of the faithful, in order thereby, in some way, to make possible a worthy divine service. Such was their intention in the beginning, such it still remains among the adherents of the non-Catholic denominations. But, when the center of devotion, the sacrifice of Christ, in which all sacrifices, all longing, all divine worship of the ancient world had found its fulfilment, was dropped, then the true service of God had to disappear; the uniting, cohesive force, Christ on the altar had been abandoned; and therefore all social and congregational life in

its highest and noblest manifestation, — the members collected around their sacrificed Head, crumbled to pieces. The sermon necessarily occupied the whole breadth of the so-called cult; for, from principle, they had no room for liturgy.

Moral life in its ideals and motives is found exemplified in the sacrifice. For, is not every act of mortification, of obedience, of love, is not every fulfilment of duty a sacrifice for sensual, proud, slothful, egotistic man? Here, in the sight of the Crucified, the struggle we must undergo until the end of our days, becomes easy; here holy quiet enters the soul, here the inclinations are moderated and the storm of the passions calmed. Here the soul becomes cognizant of the justice of God, which spared not His only Son; here on the cross it sees the work of sin, here it learns to know the love and inexplicable mercy of God, Who offered His Son for us, that we might have life and the abundance of life. Here Jesus Christ, His holy life and His bloody death, become the example, the model and norm of our life, the foundation of and rule for our whole activity. And as He has sacrificed Himself, so our life becomes a life of sacrifice; every thought of our mind, every affection of our heart, every work of our hands, life and death, joy and sorrow are now all consecrated to Him. Thus

the Sacrifice of the Altar, the Catholic liturgy, becomes a powerful lever of moral reformation, a daily impulse to progress on the road of Christian perfection, an elevation, a consecration of our whole being, which it permeates with heavenly powers.

In conclusion let me add a few words. When you in the future celebrate the holy liturgical functions, lift up your eyes to Him, our eternal High-priest; contemplate Him in the Supper-room where He for the first time, in the presence of His apostles, celebrated Mass. God Himself by the hand of Moses ordained the rite for the eating of the paschal lamb, which was to be a type of the Lamb of God, offering Himself for the sins of the world. From the narrative of the evangelists we know how carefully Christ adhered on that evening to the rites of Israel. This should admonish us to follow scrupulously the regulations of the Church, to obey exactly the rubrics which prescribe the words and actions in the celebration of Holy Mass. Let us strive to do our best to celebrate this Holy Sacrifice worthily, attentively and devoutly; for "nothing is so high and holy as this tremendous Sacrifice; and therefore we should endeavor to celebrate it with the greatest possible purity and cleanness of heart, and externally show our piety and devotion."¹ It might have been

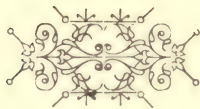
¹ Conc. Trid. Sess. XXII., De observ. et evit. in celeb. Miss.

the sight of some unworthy priest at the altar, that caused Benedict XIV. to exclaim in the words of Tertullian: *Sacrificat an insultat?*

God forbid such a thing! As often as you ascend the altar, remember well what you are doing, remember well that you are a messenger of the Church, nay, of the whole world, to God, in order to offer to Him in the name of all creatures, a sacrifice of adoration befitting God, as also of thanksgiving for all the benefits which He has bestowed on mankind; remember well, that you are asking for mercy and pardon for the sins of the whole world, so that God may recall sinners from the way of perdition and to penance; remember that you are telling God of all the miseries of life, and of the wants of body and soul, and are asking for His help; that you are imploring for all the faithful, grace, growth in virtue and the salvation of their souls; that you are praying for the deceased and for the souls in purgatory. Remember that you are placed as mediator between God and man, that you are Christ's vice-gerent, and that He wishes to renew His great Sacrifice in you and by you. If you meditate on this, my dear Timothy, then respect, admiration, gratitude, will be renewed in you daily, then your heart will always rejoice as on the day of your first

² cf. Corn. a Lap., Comm. in Mal. 1, 11,

Mass.² What is earthly and transitory becomes irksome in the course of time, becomes old, leaves your heart cold. But what is eternal, has been withdrawn from the change-ful, and will every day grow new. As your first Mass, so may each succeeding one, even your last one, be offered up with ever new courage and untiring love. And then you will enter into another sanctuary, where the veil of the species shall have been drawn aside, the Most Holy shall be revealed, where Christ, the glorified Victim, always intercedes for us.¹



¹ Hebr. 8, 1 sq.



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